

A framework for factoring citizen perceptions into local public service value systems to improve service quality

by

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ABSTRACT

Essential services are considered a fundamental human right, which determines the quality of life for citizens. A citizen's ability to exercise this right should guide public service prioritisation (McDonald, 2012). However, intensifying and increasingly violent service protests indicate citizens' dissatisfaction with the public sector, and are proof of citizens' inability to influence service prioritisation. In an attempt to enhance public satisfaction with the quality of services, this study was conducted with the aim to examine whether factoring citizens' public service perceptions into local public value systems would close the gap between what citizens expect and what they actually receive from the public sector.

In response to the above, the chosen research design is qualitative, and included a content analysis of official documents and public records (Patton, 2003:2). Furthermore, the research design was empirical and relied on data that was (mainly) secondary, and textual by nature (Mouton, 2001:165-166). The design required a low degree of control (Mouton, 2001:144). The data upon which the research was based included predominantly secondary data, but some primary data was also incorporated through the use of an expert interview (Chuene, 2012), which served as a sound boarding technique. As for the secondary data, a document analysis of official documents and public records was employed as the main data collection method (Patton, 2003:2). Purposive sampling was employed in the selection of case examples and the sample size was determined by the application of data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015:1409). A comparative analysis was employed in the data analyses phase. Data was analysed by means of systematic coding and summarised according to research themes (Welman & Kruger, 2002:189). The research study focused on all three spheres of Government, as the responsibility and accountability for rendering public services are divided among the national, provincial and local spheres of Government (Zama, 2012).

The research findings suggest that differences in the natures of the services offered in the public and private sectors impact on the service sector's definition of the concepts of satisfaction, quality, and loyalty. This implies that public (collective) services have their own unique application of these concepts. Collective services cannot be assessed according to the same quality indicators that guide private sector (particular) services. Public instruments such as the Batho Pele principles are more suitable for this purpose (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:62). In the first instance, satisfaction with public services require a reorientation of the customers' mind-set to accept that the values according to which services are produced, are altruistic and include equity, fairness and value for money (Republic of South Africa, 1997). Loyalty in the

field of public sector service encompasses voter confidence and political party support due to the direct relationship between citizen satisfaction and institutional trust.

Secondly, diagnosing failure in service quality through the gap analysis model (Zeithaml, Bitner & Gremler, 2009:44-45) was found to be applicable to both public and private sector services. Although the nature of the services in the public and private sectors vary, it was found that the criteria for service quality can be applied to both sectors.

Moreover, citizen evaluation and perceptions constitute customer feedback regarding public services and should therefore be included in the local public service-value process. Local Government is specifically equipped to facilitate citizen consultation and therefore to absorb and integrate perceptual feedback.

Furthermore, the direct relationship between unconventional political participation (boycotts; protests) and service satisfaction (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:59) compels Government to facilitate dialogue with citizens through participatory monitoring and evaluative methods (Civicus & PG Exchange, 2012:2). This would also provide a constructive avenue for the pool of potential protesters to approach Government.

Lastly, citizen participation has no real impact on service prioritisation and satisfaction with the public sector (Nabe, 2016: iii-iv). The omission of perceptions in public service value systems has created “negative” public value. High levels of public service outputs are not reflective of citizen satisfaction; and citizens often have different notions regarding what would satisfy their service needs. Institutional surveys and perception surveys are both required to ascertain the full extent of public service performance.

These findings have enabled the operationalisation of the implementation strategy and programme of the Batho Pele White Paper. It reassessed participation and demonstrated the process of moving citizenship status from a position of claiming rights, to individualised notions of responsibility (Newman & Clarke, 2009:163-166).

OPSOMMING

Esensiële dienste word as 'n fundamentele menslike reg beskou en bepaal burgers se lewensgehalte. Die vermoë om hierdie reg uit te oefen behoort die prioritering van openbare dienste in te lig (McDonald, 2012). Toenemend gewelddadige, en versterkte diensverwante optogte dui egter op ontevredenheid met openbare dienste; en dien as bewys van die publiek se onvermoë om diensprioritering te beïnvloed. Hierdie studie is uitgevoer in 'n poging om die publiek se tevredenheid met openbare dienste te verbeter en die gaping tussen wat burgers verwag en wat hulle eintlik in terme van openbare dienste ontvang, te vernou, deur die insluiting van openbare dienspersepsies by plaaslike openbare dienstestelsels te ondersoek.

In respons tot bevermelde, is die gekose navorsings ontwerp kwalitatief, en het ook 'n inhouds analise van verskeie amptelike dokumente en openbare rekords ingesluit (Patton, 2003:2). Die navorsings ontwerp was ook empiries en het staatgemaak op data wat hoofsaaklik sekondêr en teksgerig van aard was (Mouton, 2001:165-166). Die ontwerp het 'n lae mate van kontrole vereis (Mouton, 2001:44). Die data waarop die navorsing geskoei is, het hoofsaaklik sekondêre data ingesluit maar primêre data is ook geïnkorporeer deur die gebruik van 'n ekspert onderhoud. Die ekspert onderhoud het hoofsaaklik gedien as 'n klankbord tegniek (Chuene, 2012). Vir die sekondêre data, was 'n dokument analise van offisieële dokumente sowel as openbare rekords aangewend as data insamelings tegniek (Patton, 2003:2). 'n Doelgerigte benadering was onderneem tydens die steekproefneming vir die geselekteerde studie voorbeelde, en die steekproef grootte was bepaal deur die toepassing van data versadigheid om 'n versadigings punt in terme van navorsings data te bereik (Fusch & Ness, 2015:1409). 'n Vergelykende analise was toegepas in die data analise fase. Data is geanaliseer deur middel van sistemiese kodering, en is opgesom volgens navorsings temas (Welman & Kruger, 2002:189).

Die navorsing studie is op al drie regeringsvlakke gemik, aangesien die verantwoordelikheid (asook die verantwoordbaarheid) vir openbare dienslewering berus op nasionale, provinsiale en plaaslike regering (Zama, 2012). Die studie het bevind dat die aard van verskillende dienste in die openbare en private sektore die dienstesektor se definisie van die konsepte van tevredenheid, gehalte en lojaliteit beïnvloed. Dit beteken dat openbare (kollektiewe) dienste hul eie unieke toepassing van hierdie konsepte het. Kollektiewe dienste kan nie volgens dieselfde gehalte-aanwysers as private (individuele) dienste geassesseer word nie. Openbare

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instrumente soos die Batho pele beginsels is meer geskik vir publieke sektor doeleindes (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:62). Tevredenheid met openbare dienste vereis 'n heroriëntering van publieke ingesteldheid teenoor die waardes waarvolgens hierdie dienste geproduseer word. Sulke waardes berus op die beginsels van billikheid, regverdigheid en waarde vir geld (Republic of South Africa, 1997). Lojaliteit in die openbare dienstekonteks omvat kiesersvertroue en politieke party ondersteuning as gevolg van die direkte verwantskap tussen dienstetevredenheid en institusionele vertroue (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:58).

Tweedens het die studie bevind dat die die gapingsontledingsmodel, wat ontwerp is vir die diagnosering van dienstegehalte tekortkominge, op beide die openbare en private sektore van toepassing is (Zeithaml et al., 2009: 44-45). Alhoewel die aard van openbare- en private sektor dienste verskillend is, is dit bevind dat die kriteria vir dienstegehalte van toepassing is op beide sektore.

Derdens verteenwoordig publieke evaluering en persepsies diensteterugvoer in die openbare sektor en behoort daarom by die plaaslike openbare dienste waardestelsels ingesluit te word. Die plaaslike regering is spesifiek toegerus om openbare oorleg met die publiek te fasiliteer, en kan persepsies om hierdie rede absorbeer en integreer.

Vierdens, noop die direkte verwantskap tussen onkonvensionele politieke deelname (boikotte, protesoptogte) en dienstetevredenheid die Regering om die gesprek met burgers deur middel van deelnemende moniterings- en evalueringsmetodes te fasiliteer (Civicus & PG Exchange, 2012:2). Dit sal ook 'n meer opbouende manier vir die Regering bied, om die potensiële poel betogers te benader (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:59-60).

Vyfdens, het openbare deelname het geen werklike impak op diensteprioritisering en -tevredenheid nie (Nabe, 2016:iii-iv). Die weglating van persepsies uit die openbare dienste waardestelsel het tot die ontstaan van "negatiewe" publieke waarde gelei. Hoë vlakke van openbare dienste uitsette weerspieël nie noodwendig dienstetevredenheid nie. die publiek het dikwels verskillende idees oor wat hul dienebehoefte sal bevredig. Beide institusionele en persepsie-gebaseerde navorsingsopnames word benodig om die volledige omvang van openbare diensgehalte te bepaal.

Hierdie bevindinge het tot die operasionalisering van die implementeringstrategie en -program soos in die Batho Pele beginsels uiteengesit, gelei. Die bevindinge het die konsep van deelname heroorweeg en die beweging van burgerstatus vanaf die opeising van regte na

geïndividualiseerde begrippe van verantwoordelikheid gedemonstreer (Newman & Clarke, 2009:163-166).

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ACRONYMS

African National Congress (ANC)
Batho Pele Index (BPI)
City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality (CTMM)
Community Monitoring and Evaluation (CME)
Community scorecard (CSC)
Consultative citizen's report card (CCRC)
Citizen Charter (CC)
Civic Protest Barometer (CPB)
Department of Local Government and Planning (DPLG),
Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME).
Enumeration areas (EA)
Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP)
Frontline Service Delivery Monitoring (FSDM)
General Household Survey (GHS)
Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR),
Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)
Integrated Development Plan (IDP)
Integrated Development Planning (IDP)
Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Programme (ISRDP)
Living Standards Measure (LSM)
Long-Term Development Framework (LTDF)
Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF)
Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA)
Municipal Infrastructure Support Agent (MISA)
Measurement of Size (MOS)
State of Municipal Capacity Report (SMCR)
National Development Plan (NDP)
Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PME)
Planning and Implementation Management Support (PIMS)
Perception Index (P-Index)
Performance Management System (PMS)
Public Expenditure Tracking (PET)

Primary Sampling Unit (PSU)

Public expenditure tracking (PET)

Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP)

South Africa(n) (SA)

South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC_

Secondary Sampling Unit (SSU)

Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP)

Service Quality (SERVQUAL)

SMCR - State of Municipal Capacity Report

South African Social Attitudes Studies (SASAS)

Special Municipal Infrastructure Fund (SMIF)

Special Municipal Infrastructure Fund (SMIF)

Total Quality Management (TQM),

Urban Renewal Programme (URP)

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1. CHAPTER 1: RESEARCH CONCEPT

1.1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

“South Africa: Slow service delivery exasperates poor communities” (IRIN, 2005).

“Service delivery protests intensifying in run-up elections” (Mapumulo, 2016).

Statements like the above draw attention to the mounting crisis facing the South African public sector, which relates to the dissatisfaction of local communities regarding basic or public services. Communities across South Africa have been airing their grievances concerning poor service delivery and the lack of basic services in a progressively stronger and more violent manner since 2009. Disgruntled communities have staged mass demonstrations, calling on the National African Congress (ANC) Government to deliver on the promises made when it was voted into power (Business Day, 2009b). Communities have resorted to this course of action to express their discontent, and to communicate to National Government how they perceive the quality of public services, based on their own assessment of such services.

Some of the reasons provided for this situation include: inadequate leadership; management weaknesses; and institutional design (Mofolo, Mkuyana & Skade, 2014:7). Research¹ has indicated that the single most prominent category of grievance indicated by protesters relate to municipal services which include services listed in schedules 4b and 5b of the Constitution, such as water and electricity (which scored 58 percent, amounting to more than half of the total grievances (Chigwata, O'Donovan & Powell, 2017:15). Almost three-quarters (72 percent) of all the categories of citizen grievances recorded, relate directly to public services and aspects of governance. This reiterates the notion that these protests are about unsatisfactory services (whether perceived or real) - the way public services are dispersed and allocated (Chigwata et al., 2017:15).

¹ The 2016 Civic Protest Barometer (CPB) measures trends in protest action in South Africa's municipalities and is an update of the CPB published in 2014 (Working Paper Series No. 1), which covered the period 2007 to 2014. The current CPB (Working Paper Series No. 2) analyses data from January 2007 to July 2016, inclusive (Chigwata et al., 2017:3-4).

The service expectations raised by Government promises form the background of public service assessment by citizens. Dissatisfaction with Government continues to be a key driver for these protests and has been highlighted as a motivator for various violent protests (Mapumulo, 2016). Chigwata (2017:15) has confirmed this notion and has proven that a relatively high percentage (15 percent) of grievances relate to party political issues (e.g. grievances relating to matters within and between political parties, including competition for public office) Another 12 percent of the researched grievances involve socio-economic grievances (e.g. broader issues such as jobs and land distribution), which indicate the areas of citizen expectations based on promises by Government (Chigwata et al., 2017:15).

Both party political and socio-economic issues fuel discontent with National Government. Interestingly, service delivery protests were reported to decrease directly before and during elections when citizens engaged with Government (SABC, 2014), but Chigwata (2017:3) suggests that there is no apparent or direct relationship between an impending election and the number of civic protests. This is disputable, especially in light of the relatively high percentage of cited citizen grievances relating to socio-economic and party-political grievances (Chigwata et al., 2017:15).

Another example relating to unsatisfactory public service delivery presented itself during a paroxysm of xenophobic attacks on foreigners that have occurred since 2008 (Business Day, 2008), and continues to flare up. These clashes happened in areas where foreigners established themselves and where the level of basic services could hardly cater for the needs of local residents, causing people to feel that they needed to protect scarce resources (Business Day, 2008). The disillusionment with Government intensified when poor residents saw Government officials paying themselves significant salaries and bonuses despite the fact that they were failing to deliver quality services (Cape Times, 2006).

Other communities have resorted to physical violence against municipal councillors as a way of demonstrating their dissatisfaction with Government and the extent of the public services they have received (South Coast News, 2016; Singh, 2016; Singh, 2017). In contrast, community members merely threatened to physically attack local municipal officials in 2009 (Business Day, 2009b), proving an escalation of violence in public service-related protests. To compound this situation, violence in protests has increased. From 2013 onward, more than 90 percent of civic protests were associated with violence and intimidation (Chigwata et al., 2017:3). By contrast, approximately half (46 percent) of these protests were violent (Chigwata et al., 2017:13).

Ironically the number of recorded service protests in South Africa have decreased from a total of 204 protests in 2009; to 126 in 2015 (Chigwata et al., 2017:3); with a further drop to 70 protests in 2016 between January and April (Mapumulo, 2016). An analysis of the trends in violent civic protest presented by the CPB indicated the extent of violence present during service protests, and found that two-thirds of the types of violence went beyond “mere” intimidation (e.g. barricading of roads) and actually involved assault, looting, destruction of property and even death (Chigwata, O'Donovan & Powell, 2017:14). Although there were fewer protests than before, their intensity has increased over time.

The duration of the protests has also increased with many of the protests covering wide areas and lasting a long time (Chigwata et al., 2017:3). This tendency could be ascribed to the fact that the grievances of protesters have changed over time, reflecting only those that are burning issues and to which citizens are willing to sacrifice time, resources, and their safety in order to bring across the urgency of those issues. The grievances reported as underlying factors in protests in the period 2012 to July 2016 were categorised to include municipal governance; non-municipal services provided by national or provincial governments; party-political grievances; socio-economic grievances; and other (unspecified) grievances which amounted to one percent. During the period of 2007 to 2010 more or less the same grievances were recorded with the exception of the “other” grievances category being more extensive (Zama, 2012:3). “Other” grievances included protesting against a specific person; an unanswered memorandum; wrongful arrest of another – each amounting to approximately four to eight percent (ibid.). This serves to illustrate that protests have gradually become more focused and therefore more urgent.

These protests are continuing, and the service delivery violence is escalating, in spite of existing public engagement mechanisms and processes being entrenched in policies and legislation (Zama, 2012:2). This begs the following questions: what is behind these violent mass protests, xenophobic acts (Business Day, 2008) and refusal to vote (Business Day, 2006)? Why do citizens find it necessary to display such negative forms of political behaviour to communicate their concerns to Government? Could this situation be ascribed to low levels of satisfaction with current service delivery; or are citizens expecting something different from what the public sector is currently delivering?

When examining the municipal capacity assessment results for the 2004 period, only seven municipalities were able to perform their constitutionally mandated functions, and only at approximately 30 percent of what the law requires (Municipal Demarcation Board, 2005:41). This reflects badly on South African Local Government, especially because it is seen as vital

to not only public service delivery, but also to the development and economic growth of the country and its people (Municipal Demarcation Board, 2005: 41). Subsequent research has identified some of the root causes of municipalities' failure to efficiently and effectively deliver the services they are mandated to deliver (Ramutsheli & Janse van Rensburg, 2015:107). Two main root causes from which several other reasons for under-performance stem include the lack of leadership commitment as well as a management system devoid of consequences for poor performance and wrong-doing (Ramutsheli & Janse van Rensburg, 2015:107)). Other reasons for municipal failure to deliver the required services include inadequate human resources capacity; shortage of skills; unethical organisational culture, and ineffective (or non-existent) performance management systems (PMS's) (Ramutsheli & Janse van Rensburg, 2015:107; 109-110).

The State of Municipal Capacity Report (SMCR) addresses issues of inadequate human resources capacity and the shortage of skills in SA municipalities. The SMCR for the period 2010/11 found that municipal posts in rural areas were difficult to fill (Louw, 2012:5). Of the funded posts (i.e. where municipalities can afford to fill these posts) 32.5 percent remained vacant indicating that some municipalities struggle to attract appropriate staffing (Louw, 2012:5). This tendency was more prevalent amongst local municipalities (almost 50 percent) and their district municipal partners (36 percent) (Louw, 2012:5). Municipalities in metropolitan and secondary city areas were not affected to the same extent, indicating a significant urban/rural distinction in the ability to attract the required skills to perform optimally and deliver satisfactory services (Louw, 2012:5), and also hugely contribute to the lack of municipal performance.

In defence of Local Government, it has been argued that promises made by Government to voters during the 1994 and subsequent elections set unrealistic targets for local municipalities and is engineering municipal downfall by promising "free services" to voters, who happen to take this very seriously and view it as a 'contract' between them and National Government (Business Day, 2009a). The policy on Free Basic Services was instituted subsequent to an announcement in 2000, and is aimed at eradicating poverty in conjunction with other development initiatives (Portfolio, 2006c:62). The implementation of this policy stretches the capacity of already strained local municipalities. Furthermore, municipalities are deemed autonomous and any 'free services' should therefore come from their own revenue² and taxes

² According to section 214(1) of the Constitution, national funds should be distributed equitably between all three spheres of Government, including Local Government as an autonomous sphere (Republic of

collected from rate payers. The delivery of basic services at no cost constitutes a delicate matter which should be reviewed as it has financial as well as credibility implications in terms of the confidence that people have in Government (Fletcher, 1999:1-2).

The service delivery crisis also puts the spotlight on those agencies that have entered into public/ private partnerships (PPPs) with private sector businesses to deliver essential public-services on behalf of Local Government. According to Craythorne, a municipal council must assess the various service delivery options, taking into account the direct and indirect costs; the capacity and potential future capacity of the prospective service provider to deliver; and the views of the local community and organised labour (2003:165-166).

However, incorporating the private sector means that the role of Local Government in ensuring the equal and fair distribution of public services must be separate from the actual delivery of services (Van Niekerk, 1998:2). This implies the separation of service mandate from the actual service provider, and is debated in the Discussion Document on Local Government and the Water Services Bill (Van Niekerk, 1998:2).

Dinsdale and Marson (1999:21) recognised that a significant 'gap' exists between citizens' service expectations, and the actual services that they receive (or believe that they receive). Service expectations usually embody what citizens want to receive; serve as a yardstick against which present and future service encounters are compared; and is what citizens think they will receive during the service encounter or experience (Cant, Brink & Brijal, 2002:239). Service expectations can be divided into at least three levels which include (i) the predicted service level which constitutes the citizen's anticipated level of performance; (ii) the desired level which reflects the ideal service level and embodies what the citizen hopes to obtain from the service experience; and (iii) the adequate level representing the minimum service level that the citizen is able to tolerate without being dissatisfied (Cant et al., 2002:240). Dinsdale and Marson's (1999:21) theory might offer a possible explanation of the above-mentioned citizen behaviour in as much as they exemplify the above-mentioned gap.

Before investigating citizen dissatisfaction with public services and the public sector, closer attention ought to be paid to the nature of public services.

South Africa, 1994). It continues, determining that national and provincial government must support Local Government (Republic of South Africa, 1994). The Division of Revenue Act makes provision for the transfer of national funds to local municipalities through equitable share portions and conditional grants specifying the conditions and applications of allocations (Republic of South Africa, 2006).

1.2. PUBLIC SERVICES VERSUS PRIVATE SERVICES

Gildenhuys and Knipe (2000:57) defines public services as those services that cannot be rendered by the private sector due to the collective nature of such services and the fact that they are necessary for Government to attain its objectives. In most cases, Government limits its involvement to those goods or services that cannot be produced efficiently or consumed in its absence (i.e. market failure), or for which there is a legal, national security or public trust reason for delivery (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:13-14).

The delivery of public services is the responsibility of all spheres of Government, each sphere delivering services according to their mandate as stipulated in schedule 4 and 5 of the Constitution (Republic of South Africa, 1996). The specific localised public services provided by Local Government are defined as those services that a municipality provides (within its area of jurisdiction) to and also for the benefit of the local community that it serves, irrespective of (i) whether fees, charges or tariffs are demanded, or (ii) whether the municipality provides such a service itself or contracts another service provider to render the service on its behalf (Republic of South Africa, 2000).

Further distinctions are apparent in the use of the private sector term “customer” and the public sector term “citizen” (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:5). Unlike most of their public sector counterparts, private sector businesses must earn a profit to survive and provide its customers with unique treatment, often putting certain customers above others (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:5). The public service, on the other hand, does not aim to capture a profit or plays favourites with its citizens (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:5). This requires that all citizens receive the same level of service to ensure the adherence to democratic values (e.g., accountability, loyalty, the rule of law) and the principles of natural justice (fairness, due process, impartiality) and to horizontal equity (equal treatment of people of different groups and regions) (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:5).

In the private sector, the direct recipient of a service (i.e. the customer) receives all the benefits from a given service. such benefits do not flow to others or the public at large (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:6). In the case of many public services, however, especially in the areas of regulation and enforcement, a large portion of the benefits flow to citizens at large, not to the direct recipient of the service (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:6). This constitutes the most significant difference between private- and public services.

A closer look at the levels of public service delivery follows to try and ascertain the reasons for dissatisfaction with public services amongst citizens of local communities.

1.3. LEVELS OF PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY

When the status of public service quality is explored, it is essential to start with Local Government, the sphere of government closest to households and communities. Local Government is not performing well in terms of its constitutional mandate. In 2006, a total of 74 municipalities in SA did not have the services of civil engineers, technologists or technicians (Service, 2006:58). Only 36 percent of all municipal managers country-wide were in possession of a Grade 12 qualification (Service, 2006:58).

The situation for municipal managers has changed dramatically over the last few years. The Municipal Demarcation Board reported that municipal manager qualifications on average exceed that of their management peers (Louw, 2012:7). Almost 50 percent of municipal managers have a post-graduate degree and almost 1 in 3 have a Master's or PhD degree (Louw, 2012:7). Corporate services managers, too, follow in having similar high levels of academic qualification (Louw, 2012:7). Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for technical services managers. Almost 50 percent of technical services managers do not have an undergraduate degree, yet are responsible for services that account for the highest proportion of municipal asset value and for functions that represent the bulk of municipal expenditure (Louw, 2012:7).

In response to the public sector dilemma, National Government in 2006 made more than R700 million available over the following three years for the improvement of public service delivery in South Africa (SA) (Segalwe, 2006) Project Consolidate, a national initiative to support municipalities struggling to meet their targets, assists municipal councils that perform less than 30 percent of their assigned functions (Portfolio, 2006e:59). In 2006 a total of 136 municipalities received assistance from the project, which indicates that almost 50 percent of municipalities country-wide found themselves in crisis and in need of external intervention at the time (Portfolio, 2006e:59). Government has since terminated its efforts in this regard. Reports on these municipalities by the auditor-general have cast doubt on whether Project Consolidate was effective (City Press, 2011). Audits of 16 municipalities in the Northern Cape only reported a single improvement, while the remainder received worse audit ratings (ibid.). The Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (2009:4) found that,

although both Project Consolidate and the 5-Year Strategic Agenda (the then two key support initiatives), had yielded some progress, they had not been able to sufficiently address deep-rooted problems and capacity challenges.

Over the years there have been a number of other Government initiatives and programmes to promote service delivery and institutional support. These include the former Planning and Implementation Management Support (PIMS) Centres, the Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Programme (ISRDP) and the Urban Renewal Programme (URP) nodal programmes, the Integrated Development Planning (IDP) analysis and training weeks, the Bucket Eradication programme, the Ilima project (Old Mutual), and the donor-supported Consolidated Municipal Transformation Programme (CMTP) (Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, 2009:4).

Another support programme, the Municipal Infrastructure Support Agent (MISA), is a national government component. MISA interventions are executed through the provision of technical capacity deployments (engineers, town planners, project managers, and other built environment fields) in various municipalities (Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, 2016). The support is managed within the provincial sphere of Government, with the assistance of provincial programme managers (Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, 2016).

Key priority developmental aspects for Local Government in terms of the provision of basic services to the poor include, amongst others, the expansion and provision of free basic services (as discussed before) and acceleration of delivery to poor households (Heese & Allen, 2004). Other priority aspects include the extension of services to areas not serviced; as well as the creation of jobs through the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) (Heese & Allen, 2004). Lastly, the enhancement of capacity through administrative and financial reforms should also be seen as a priority developmental aspect in terms of the service provision to the most vulnerable citizens (Heese & Allen, 2004).

In 2004, backlogs in terms of the delivery of basic services remained high (Heese & Allen, 2004). The national figures for households without access to water, sanitation, refuse removal, electricity and housing at that point in time are indicated in Table 1-1.

Table 1-1: Service provision backlog data from 2004

| Water | Sanitation | Refuse | Electricity | Housing |
|-----------|------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|
| 3,196,613 | 4,887,163 | 5,249,849 | 3,507,172 | 1,836,226 |

Source: Heese and Allen (2004).

Table 1-1 reveals that a significant number of people has been living without essential resources, and that their basic physical needs in terms of the provision of water, sanitation, refuse removal, electricity and housing are not being addressed by public service provision (Swanepoel, 1997:2). According to the above data the housing backlog appeared to be the smallest at the time; however, various challenges remain. Census statistics from 2006 show that the housing backlog has been addressed and that in 2006 (two years later) there were approximately 1,6 million informally-housed households (which are not formally part of Government programmes aimed at accessing subsidies in order to obtain formal housing) – almost as much as the backlog indicated by Table 1-1 (Portfolio, 2006b:100). The backlog in terms of water and sanitation were noted as significant in 2006 (Heese & Allen, 2004).

The municipal service delivery index (Munidex) measures the performance of municipalities, district, councils, metropolitan municipalities and provinces on actual service delivery (Hawes & Mohamed, 2009:1). Five key indicators or service delivery elements were applied namely water; housing; sanitation; electricity and waste removal (Hawes & Mohamed, 2009: 1-3). Key findings by Munidex include that the City of Cape Town scored at 89 percent and delivers the best service (in terms of service outputs), followed by Johannesburg which scored 88 percent, which is comparatively high if one considers that the national average score for service delivery was measured at 59,7 percent (Hawes & Mohamed, 2009:2). Other findings revealed that the Limpopo province had the highest percentage of people living in formal dwellings (83,2 percent) but is the only province to score below 50 percent on the status index which was determined on the basis of the proportion of households that have access to public-services (Hawes & Mohamed, 2009:1-2). This means that the most densely populated province is unable to render public services to its citizens.

The General Household Survey (GHS)³ found that access to basic services has increased in the past few years (Statistics SA, 2015). The percentage of households with access to

³ The GHS has been conducted on an annual basis since 2002, and it measures changes in the living conditions of South African households, determining household access to various services and amenities, such as basic services, food, health-care and medical aid (Statistics SA, 2015).

improved sanitation has increased from 62,3 percent in 2002 to 79,5 percent in 2014 (Statistics SA, 2015). The percentage of households without access to any sanitation facilities declined from 12,3 percent in 2002 to 4,9 percent in 2014 (Statistics SA, 2015). The same was true for water. The 2014 release shows 13,2 million (85,9 percent) households had access to piped water in 2014, compared to 9,4 million (79,9 percent) in 2005 (Statistics SA, 2015). Although there were improvements in terms of access to basic services, the study also found that citizens grew more dissatisfied with services over time, e.g. only 61,4 percent of households in 2014 indicated that they experienced ‘good’ quality service, compared to 76,4 percent of households in 2005 (Statistics SA, 2015). This raises serious concerns about the communication between Government and its citizens where service failures are concerned. In the event of there being no meaningful way to enable people to communicate their service feedback and experience of current municipal service delivery, citizens have no choice but to revert to mass protest.

In spite of the grim picture painted above, efforts have been made to improve municipal performance management in order to address the service delivery issue. Some of the publicised instruments for municipal performance regulation and improvement include the following:

- A Performance Guide Document endorsed by the Department of Local Government and Planning (DPLG), which is aimed at municipal managers as well as the top 10 ranks of council officials (Portfolio, 2006d:93-95,);
- The introduction of Municipal Performance Regulations for Municipal Managers and Managers directly accountable to municipal managers (Portfolio, 2006d:93-95);
- The “Best Councillors Award”, an award to Councils and individual Councillors for excellent performance (Portfolio, 2006a: 92);
- An incentive for performance proposed by the DPLG which includes new increased salary scales for councillors based on the category of municipality in which they serve (Portfolio, 2006a:92); and
- The Special Municipal Infrastructure Fund (SMIF) has been instituted to encourage innovations supporting infrastructure projects in municipalities, and all municipalities are eligible to apply for grants, which may be awarded as a once-off or renewable grant (Innovation Insights, 2004:2).

Although the above initiatives play an important role in improving municipal performance, much can be gained if the feedback in community audits can be included in municipal performance processes. In order to define the roles and responsibilities of public sector

institutions, and the entitlements and citizens in terms of service provision, attention will be given to the relevant pieces of legislation.

1.4. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The responsibility for production and distribution of public services rests with all spheres of Government (Republic of South Africa, 1996). This legislative framework aims to explore the concept of public services in terms of the legal requirements and obligations that it creates for the various sphere of Government. The framework also aims to explore the entitlements of citizens as far as public services are concerned.

The Constitution of South Africa determines a few important aspects relevant to this study. The first aspect relates to the entitlements of citizens in terms of public service, as mentioned above. Section 195 of the Act requires that: (i) services must be provided to citizens, and (ii) that citizens' needs have to be responded to, affording them (i.e. citizens) the opportunity to participate in policy-making and to hold Government to account (Republic of South Africa, 1996).

Following citizen consultation and service delivery, the next step would be to ensure that citizens receive quality services. For this reason, the Policy Paper on Performance Monitoring and Evaluation that has been released, and the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation has been established (Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, 2015:7). The Department aims to promote sound practices in terms of reporting, monitoring and evaluation of public service delivery (Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation, 2015:7). Government's 2009 Policy Paper on Performance Monitoring and Evaluation has established outcomes-focused delivery agreements (Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation, 2015:7). A set of evaluation standards has been developed to ensure that evaluations adhere to a minimum standard (Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation, 2014:12).

The above discussion is relevant to the research study because it motivates citizens' legal claim to quality services (Republic of South Africa, 1996; Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation, 2015:7). In order to achieve this, citizens need to participate by being able to communicate their needs (and perceptions) regarding services to Government (Republic of South Africa, 1996). The importance of factoring in citizen perceptions resides in the fact that it enables citizens to inform decision makers about services and therefore improve its quality

(Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:v); hold Government accountable; and influence public policy (Republic of South Africa, 1996).

The second aspect relates to the requirements and obligations that the Constitution has created for all spheres of Government in terms of public services (Republic of South Africa, 1996). All spheres of Government are to be involved in public service delivery, dispersing a variety of public services according to their constitutional mandates as stipulated in schedule four and section five of the Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996). The Constitution stipulates that the administration in every sphere of government needs to adhere to the basic values and principles governing public administration, which includes public service provision and citizen participation as set out in section 195(1) of the Constitution (Republic of South Africa, 1996). Section 4 of the Municipal Systems Act elaborates on this point and stipulates the content and extent of this compulsory citizen consultation process (Republic of South Africa, 2000).

The National Development Plan (NDP), which acts as a policy directive aimed at identifying national development objectives, continues, stating that the all spheres of government should also be involved in the improvement of the quality of public services which they produce (South African Government News Agency, 2013). The improvement of public service quality has been recognised as key in improving social welfare and reducing poverty and inequality (South African Government News Agency, 2013). In order to facilitate the involvement of all Government spheres in the improvement of public service quality, the NDP stipulated that the President and Deputy President will be the lead champions of national development and service quality improvement within Cabinet in Government and throughout the country (South African Government News Agency, 2013). The NDP also emphasises that premiers and mayors should take the place of active champions of the NDP, with their offices being catalytic agencies to drive implementation in the provinces and municipalities (South African Government News Agency, 2013). This demonstrates that the production; delivery; and quality control of public services rest with all spheres of Government. Even the Batho Pele White Paper supports this notion and the principles of service delivery apply to all parts of the public sector including national, provincial, and Local Government (Republic of South Africa, 1997).

In addition to being responsible for producing their own mandated services, national and provincial government are tasked to support and regulate the performance of Local Government in its delivery of public services (Republic of South Africa, 1996). In terms of provincial government, section 139 of the Constitution determines that a provincial executive may intervene if a municipality fails to fulfil an obligation (Republic of South Africa, 1996). In sections 5(2)(a)(i) -(ii) and 5(2)(c)(i) of the Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA)

continues to stipulate that provincial treasuries must monitor municipal compliance of the MFMA, and assist municipalities in preparing the budget (Republic of South Africa, 2003). The NDP, an economic policy framework and long-term strategic plan, elaborates on this and emphasises that provinces should further develop their capacity to support and oversee municipalities (Department: The Presidency of the Republic of South Africa, 2011:46).

In the national sphere of government, the National Treasury and various other national departments are also involved in municipal public service delivery, especially as far as financial matters are concerned (National Treasury, 2013). Treasury is responsible for prescribing all regulations, frameworks, budget formats, inflation limits, and other information required by the MFMA (Municipal Finance Management Act) to ensure uniform norms and standards for implementation (Republic of South Africa, 2003). The monitoring and reporting obligations of municipalities allow for providing early warning where municipalities experience financial distress, with appropriate interventions being instituted to ensure that such municipalities are provided with opportunities to recover (National Treasury, 2013). National Treasury (much like provincial governments) can also provide support to municipalities requesting assistance in developing financial recovery plans, in line with Chapter 13 of the MFMA (Republic of South Africa, 2003).

Other national government departments also have a key role to play in the provision of public services, through policy development and through programme implementation in provinces and municipalities (National Treasury, 2013). The Department of Cooperative Governance has an overarching responsibility for strengthening cooperative governance, whilst the departments of Water Affairs, Mineral Resources, Energy, Transport and Human Settlements take responsibility for monitoring sector-specific outcomes and service delivery (National Treasury, 2013).

In Local Government, the Municipal Systems Act describes the public service-related responsibilities of Local Government in section 73 (1) (a)-(c) and include the following areas: (a) to give priority to the basic needs of the local community; (b) to promote the development of the local community; and (c) to ensure that all members of the local community have access to at least the minimum level of basic municipal services (Republic of South Africa, 2000). Section 78 of the Act continues to state how municipalities can opt to render basic municipal services themselves, or make use of external mechanisms of service delivery (Republic of South Africa, 2000). This notion will be further explored in 2.2.1 of this research study.

The Municipal Systems Act (Republic of South Africa, 2000) also stipulates the content and extent of the compulsory citizen participation process, as mentioned earlier. Sections 73 and 4(2) (c) and (e) of this Act require the encouragement of citizen involvement and consultation (Republic of South Africa, 2000). The Act continues to describe the content and extent of the prescribed consultation processes (as mentioned previously), and specifies that, from a content perspective, citizen consultation must include the level, quality, range, and impact of services distributed by the municipality, either directly or through another service provider (Republic of South Africa, 2000). Section 42 elaborates on the extent of this compulsory consultation process and states that a municipality must involve the local community in the development, implementation and review of the municipality's PMS and in particular allow the community to participate in the setting of appropriate key performance indicators and performance targets of the municipality (Republic of South Africa, 2000).

Section 19(2) of the Municipal Structures Act specifies that the processes of community involvement should also be reviewed annually (Republic of South Africa, 1998). This indicates that the Act not only provides for citizen involvement but also ensures that the processes of involving them should be revisited and adapted according to the needs of communities; the priorities to meet such needs; and the available delivery mechanisms (Republic of South Africa, 1998).

The preceding discussion on the requirements and obligations that the Constitution has created for Government in terms of public services (Republic of South Africa, 1996), is important because it provides the focus of this research study – which includes public services in its entirety, as produced and delivered by all spheres of Government. However, Local Government enables citizen participation through specific consultation mechanisms and provides a point of access for citizen perceptions to be factored in (Republic of South Africa, 2000). Local Government (and therefore municipalities) are enabled by the Municipal Systems Act (in section 42) to facilitate citizen participation through the legal use of specific consultation mechanisms which are innate to Local Government (Republic of South Africa, 2000). This includes participation in the development, implementation and review of the municipality's PMS; and participation in the setting of key performance indicators and performance targets of the municipality (Republic of South Africa, 2000).

Local Government (through the prescriptions of the Municipal Systems Act) in essence becomes the point where citizen participation is implemented (Republic of South Africa, 2000). However, the Constitution appointed all spheres of Government as custodians of citizen participation by tasking them with the responsibility of ensuring citizen participation (Republic

of South Africa, 1996). Local Government and municipalities are the closest point of contact that Government has with citizens and legislation has specifically enabled Local Government to absorb citizen perceptions which should then be moved upwards and distributed to the other spheres of Government, in order to inform decision and policy making (Republic of South Africa, 1996). Being nearest and most visible to citizens, municipalities are often at the receiving end of displays of citizen dissatisfaction with public services, thereby creating the erroneous impression that Local Government alone is to blame for citizen service dissatisfaction, when service delivery in reality involves all spheres of Government.

In light of the selected pieces of legislation discussed above, it is evident that Local Government has a duty to perform a level of services which adhere to the basic needs of citizens, as well as include citizen consultation (Republic of South Africa, 2000). Local Government should be supported by the other spheres of Government to attain this goal (Republic of South Africa, 1996). Other spheres of Government also have their own service delivery duties apart from supporting Local Government in attaining its service delivery goals (Republic of South Africa, 1996). Local Government is uniquely equipped to facilitate citizen participation through consultation mechanisms, but all other spheres of Government are tasked with the responsibility to ensure citizen participation (Republic of South Africa, 1996).

1.5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The guiding research question is: will the enhanced incorporation of citizens' perceptions in public service-value systems address the low levels of satisfaction and close the gap between what citizens expect and what they actually receive in terms of public services? Other key research questions in this study include the following: what does citizens' extreme political behaviour (i.e. violent mass protests, xenophobic acts) signal in terms of public service delivery? Why do citizens feel that they need to express dissatisfaction with services in that way? Why do citizens experience (dis)satisfaction with current public service delivery?

1.6. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The following concepts were applied to construct the theoretical basis which supported this research – citizen perceptions; public services; public service quality assessment (particularly in relation to citizen evaluation); and communication.

The inclusion of ***citizen perceptions*** in the planning and decision-making processes (through the use of, e.g. survey tools) promised the potential to inform decision makers about citizen's public service needs, as opposed to what Government decision makers think they should need (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:v).⁴ The inclusion of citizen perceptions through citizen evaluation also ensures that service improvement strategies identify appropriate and relevant standards of service, as well as collect information from internal clients (i.e. public servants) (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:v).

Public services are distinctly different from private sector services (Gildenhuys & Knipe, 2000:57) and therefore require an adapted approach to how ***service quality assessment*** in the ***public sphere*** will take place. It is difficult to assign meaning to satisfaction levels in the absence of normative benchmarks or quality measures, which summarises the current public sector services dilemma (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:v). Unless clearly defined quality measures (or quality dimensions) are established, the public sector will find it challenging to embark on a service improvement endeavour.

⁴ Citizens' needs typically drive what they think Local Government should achieve on their behalf and are manifested in the messages which are communicated to Local Government (Fourie, 1982:11-12).

Communication, the academic contributions of Barker, with specific regard to participatory (or developmental) communication (2001:5-6), and McNair, with regard to political communication (1999:3-4), played a key role in outlining how the discussion between Government and citizens should take place in order to link service expectations and citizen satisfaction (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:21). The disconnect between service expectations and citizen satisfaction is believed to be at the core of public service dissatisfaction (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:21), and will be discussed in more detail in 1.6.1.3 of this research. Participatory communication provides the media (or methods) to facilitate communication during services assessment in the public sector. Political communication is significant due to the political nature of public services prioritisation and distribution.

1.6.1. Citizen Perceptions

Perception is defined as the process by which people select, organise and interpret stimuli to the five senses and is the way in which buyers interpret the world surrounding them (Cant et al., 2002:99). Differently put, perception can be defined as the process used by individuals to give meaning to their environment by interpreting and organising sensory impressions (Harvey & Brown, 2001:108). It is believed that behind every act of perceiving is the individual's past experience which has accumulated a relatively stable cognitive organisation within the individual and determines the meaning of a particular perception (Cant et al., 2002:100). This refers to the fact that perception is based on an individual frame of reference (Cant et al., 2002:100). This means that, because every individual's past experiences and exposures are unique, perceptions are also varied and a similar stimulus may be interpreted differently (Harvey & Brown, 2001:108). Perceptions might even differ from reality (Harvey & Brown, 2001:108) on the basis of an individual's past experience and framework of reference (Cant et al., 2002:100).

It is also believed that perception is selective and individuals notice only a small number of stimuli in their environment (Cant et al., 2002:99). Due to the huge amount of information to which individuals are exposed, individuals only attend to a relatively small percentage of information which is referred to as perceptual defence and this indicates that individuals are not merely passive recipients (Cant et al., 2002: 101). Lastly, perception is believed to be subjective and individuals pay attention only to what they are interested in or to what affects them, or to that which is in line with their beliefs and values (Cant et al., 2002:100).

The three aspects of perception (i.e. frame of reference, selectivity, and subjectivity) resonate within the S.A. Local Government context in the sense that citizens in the various parts of the

country have developed different frames of reference due to a range of cultural exposures (e.g. S.A. legislation provides for 11 official languages) (Cant et al., 2002: 99-100). The value systems that have been culturally entrenched also influence the subjectivity and selectivity that citizens apply to receive stimuli. Racial segregation during the previous dispensation has also affected how citizens perceive their surroundings; how they respond to stimuli; and which stimuli they take notice of. The significant inequality gap between rich and poor also influences perception.

The authors Dinsdale and Marson (1999:11) identified a few factors which influence the formation of citizen perceptions specifically regarding public services. Figure 1-1 illustrates the factors that contribute to the formation of perceptions about public services (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:11).

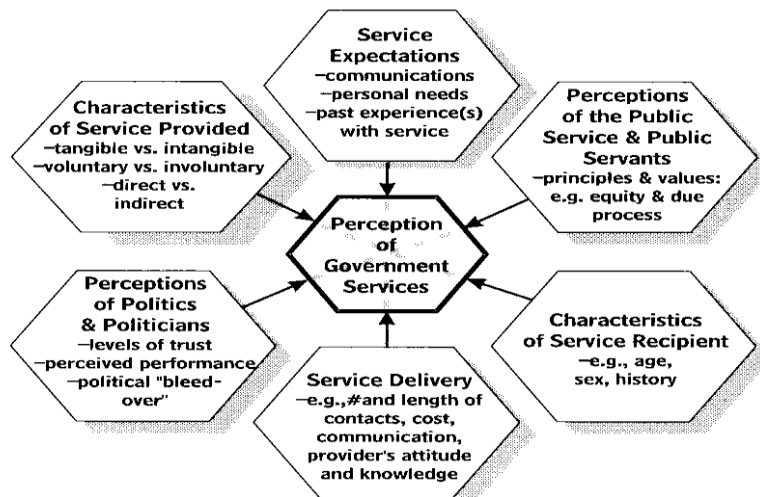


Figure 1-1: Factors contributing to the formation of perceptions concerning public services

Source: Dinsdale and Marson (1999:11)

Factors which typically influence public service perceptions include service expectations constructed through a variety of communications regarding the service during the citizen's search for service information (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:64); past service encounters with public sector service providers (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:64); and citizens' service needs (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:11) based on their personal characteristics and unique circumstances (Cant et al., 2002:76). General impressions of public service as a whole as well as that of public servants and officials, is another contributing factor influencing the formation of perceptions regarding public services, and relate to the broader ethos and values attached to Government as an organisation, e.g. equity; fairness and due process (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:11). Citizens' personal characteristics, or that which is generally known as shared group traits belonging to groups of citizens (Cant et al., 2002:76), also influence public service perceptions, e.g. age (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:11).

Actual public service delivery experiences also impact directly on public service perceptions, e.g., the attitude and knowledge displayed by front-line employees during the service experience is a differentiating aspect of service quality (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:302), and will leave an impression with citizens (whether positive or negative) which will, in turn, influence citizens' perception of public services (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:11). Perceptions of politics and politicians proved to be crucial in shaping public service perceptions (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:11). Research has proven that perceived spheres of Government performance has an effect on institutional trust – low levels of perceived municipal performance were directly linked to low levels of institutional trust (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:59). Research has proven that citizens do indeed have trouble distinguishing public service from the political sphere (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:11). The characteristics of public service in itself, also contribute to public service perception (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:11). One of the characteristics of collective services is that they are involuntary due to the monopolistic nature of collective services (Gildenhuis & Knipe, 2000: 57-59), whereas private sector services (or particular services) are voluntary (Gildenhuis & Knipe, 2000:57-59). The evaluation of service attributes (i.e. voluntary or involuntary) bears directly on service expectations, and ultimately on service perceptions and the same is true for public services (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:64).

The following subsection is focused on how these perceptions are being formed and the reason for investigating this is to obtain a better understanding of what role perceptions play in the service delivery dilemma facing S.A. Local Government.

1.6.1.1. The perceptual process

One perspective on the perceptual process describes such process as consisting of four stages which include exposure, attention, interpretation and memory (or recall) (Cant et al., 2002:101). In the perceptual process the first stage, exposure, refers to the degree to which people notice a stimulus that is in their range of sensory receptors (Cant et al., 2002:101). The next step, namely attention, refers to the extent to which the processing activity is devoted to a particular stimulus (Cant et al., 2002:101), whilst the following step, which includes interpretation, refers to the process by which people assign meaning to a stimulus (Cant et al., 2002:101). Recall or memory, which represents the final step, refers to the process by which marketers try to ensure that the consumer will remember their product (Cant et al., 2002:101).

The perceptual process presents a marketing-oriented view of perception which is not quite applicable to the public sector because the nature of public sector services may vary from that

of private sector services (which will be discussed in more detail in 2.2.2 of this research). The above-mentioned perceptual process model by Cant et al. (2002:101) assumes that either all services are particular in nature, or that the model will always be applied in instances where the services in question are of a particular nature, hence the reason that consumers have to remember the product because there are so many other service alternatives. (With services of a collective nature it is difficult to find service alternatives, e.g. water, and the final step of memory is not always applicable because such service is often rendered by a monopoly and the user needs the service irrespective whether the service experience was good or bad).

The interpretation stage is applicable to the public sector. During the interpretation stage people tend to interpret information according to their existing beliefs, attitudes, and general disposition, whilst marketers need the stimulus to be interpreted in the way they intend it to be interpreted. In the public sector, exposure to a service also needs to be interpreted by citizens in the way that policy makers and leaders have intended it to be interpreted for citizens to continue supporting such leaders and policy makers, and ultimately vote for them.

Another perspective on the perceptual process is presented by Harvey and Brown (2001:103) who defined perception as the process that individuals employ to give meaning to their environment. According to these authors, individuals interpret, organise and classify sensory impressions to obtain meaning for themselves, which renders the perception process completely subjective and potentially different from reality depending on the external factors involved. In terms of perception formation, selectivity refers to the choice of information that is perceived and constitutes a process of acceptance or rejection of information and sensory impressions (Harvey & Brown, 2001:102). People tend to reject information that, for example, conflict with their ideas and values and tend to accept information that is satisfying and in agreement with their ideas (Harvey & Brown, 2001:102). "We see and hear what we are interested in because of what we are, what our values are and what we believe in" (Cant et al., 2002:100). Similarly, people might interpret stimuli differently according to their various backgrounds and experiences. The process of closure refers to the tendency of people to fill in the missing information to give the perception a sense of completion, and people may perceive more in a given situation than is already there (Harvey & Brown, 2001:102-103).

As discussed by Harvey and Brown (2001:103) in the previous paragraph, individual perception constitutes a relatively stable cognitive composition within the individual and determines the meaning of particular immediate observations/ discernments and longer-term opinions/ views (Cant et al., 2002:100). The perceptual process is key as it (a) impacts on the ability to reach consumers [or citizens]; and (b) adds or diminishes both short-term

impressions/ awareness (i.e. observations/ discernments) as well as longer-term cognitive structures (i.e. opinions/ views) (Cant et al., 2002:100). This is particularly meaningful in the context of public services and renders Harvey and Brown's process model useful in this specific context (2001:102). The use of public services leaves an impression with citizens which remains until the next election, which is why it is critical that Government takes note of citizen perceptions (which embodies their impressions, awareness, observations, and discernments).

There is also another advantage to taking citizen perceptions into account, i.e. that such perceptions and impressions may guide Government improvement strategies by providing continuous feedback regarding public services as they are being implemented, which may potentially address service shortcomings. With regard to the ability to reach consumers, Government deliver services which by their very nature are mostly collective and quasi-collective. This means that there is no real haste or need to target new potential user markets – people need potable water, electricity, sanitation, and waste removal for their daily survival and will have to use these services irrespectively. This, however, does not imply that the public sector should discard the notion of obtaining citizen feedback on public services.

There are various factors that can influence people's perceptions of public services which are not present in the private sector, such as the (in)voluntariness of public services. In the private sector individuals use services based on choice, whilst there is little or no choice in the public sector as to who the service provider will be (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:9).

Perception is directly or indirectly influenced by the ability of an individual/ citizen to learn and is defined as the process through which individuals acquire buying and consumption knowledge and experience which they apply to future related behaviour (Cant et al., 2002:108). The basic elements of learning may consist of a stimulus; the response to such stimulus; and, finally, the reinforcement of the response that occurred after exposure to the stimulus (Cant et al., 2002:108-109).

A stimulus is the first step in the learning process and may consist of a tangible object or an intangible object (i.e., such as a service) that triggers a response and stimulates an interest in the citizen, motivating the citizen to seek after the object of learning (Cant et al., 2002:108-109). Along with the citizens' needs and objectives, motivation will drive individual learning; accelerating the learning process when such needs and objectives become more urgent and the motivation to satisfy them increases (Cant et al., 2002:109). A response consists of any action, reaction or state of mind of the citizen emanating from a stimulus, and may occur

several times before a response is generated (Cant et al., 2002:109). Reinforcement creates favourable circumstances which increase the likelihood that a specific desired response might occur; and causes the individual to correctly connect the stimulus and the response, resulting in repetitive behaviour that establishes favourable future behavioural patterns (Cant et al., 2002:109).

During the process of perception, individuals only attend to a relatively small percentage of the stimuli which they are exposed to, which indicates the selective nature of perception (Cant et al., 2002:99-100). Another characteristic of perception is its subjective nature, i.e., that perception is based on an individual's frame of reference (Cant et al., 2002:100) and may be influenced by external factors.

Citizens' perceptions of politics, politicians and of public service and public servants are predominantly influenced by views from various media organisations (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:11). The next subsection therefore comprises a discussion of the influence of the media on public perceptions in greater detail.

1.6.1.2. Perceptions and the media

McNair (1999:11-12) argues that the media act both as transmitters and as receivers of political messages. This means that the media (a) is used by political actors to have their messages communicated to targeted audiences, and (b) provide value-laden and biased accounts of political events reflecting a political "reality" with various facets. Figure 1-2 illustrates the role of the media in constructing citizens' perceptions about politics (McNair, 1999:5). It also describes the composite elements, as well as the interactive process involved in shaping citizen perceptions and communicating information about politics and the public sector (McNair, 1999:3-4).

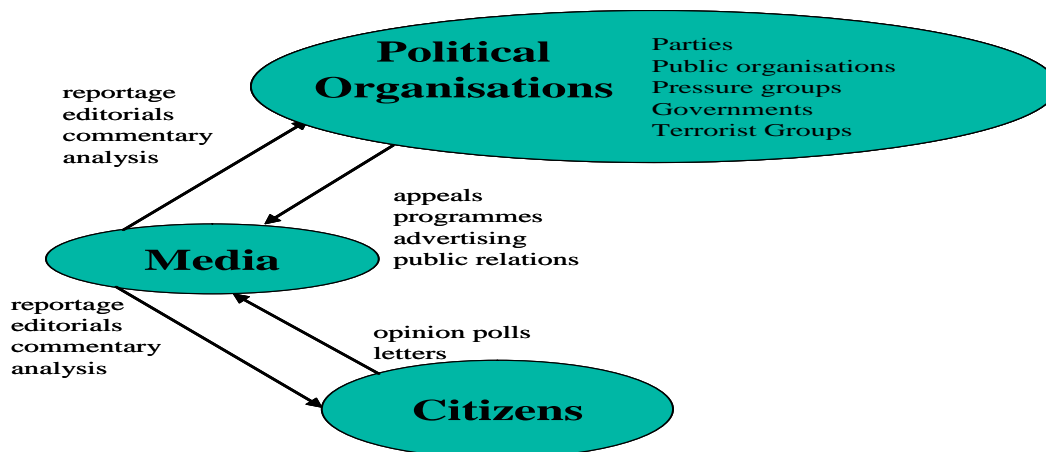


Figure 1-2: The role of the media in constructing citizens' perceptions about politics

Source: McNair (1999:5)

The nature of public services also impacts hugely on citizen perceptions thereof, in the sense that public services are very different from private services. As mentioned earlier, public services are predominantly collective by nature, which is the main reason why they are rendered by Government. This stands in stark contrast to the particular nature of private sector services (Gildenhuys & Knipe, 2000:57-58). Typical traits of collective services are that they are non-apportionable, non-exclusive, inexhaustible, and monopolistic, and can only be funded through rates and taxes (Gildenhuys & Knipe, 2000:57-58). This causes individual citizens (who already have varying perceptions because they possess different characteristics, e.g., age and gender) to perceive public services in a different light from private services (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:11).

According to Statistics SA (2004:14), Gauteng province has a larger proportion of men than women, due to the fact that this province has the highest level of industrial activity in the country. It may be concluded that men in Gauteng perceive public services differently from men in other provinces because their motivation for being in the province is quite different (i.e., they migrated to the province mainly for industrial reasons). Their service expectations and needs could therefore vary greatly from the expectations and needs of other males in the other provinces.

The following subsection is aimed at identifying and addressing the core of the service delivery dilemma and dissatisfaction with public service delivery, as described in the background discussion to this document.

1.6.1.3. Perceptions and the “expectations gap”

Citizens’ service expectations as well as actual service delivery are two more factors which may shape citizen perceptions of public services, as mentioned previously. Dinsdale and Marson (1999:3) identified an “expectations gap” which exists between citizen expectations of services, and the actual service delivery that they receive from Local Government. This “gap” can be further defined as the disconnect between (a) what citizens want and what they perceive they get, and (b) their satisfaction with the services they receive in the end (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999: 21).

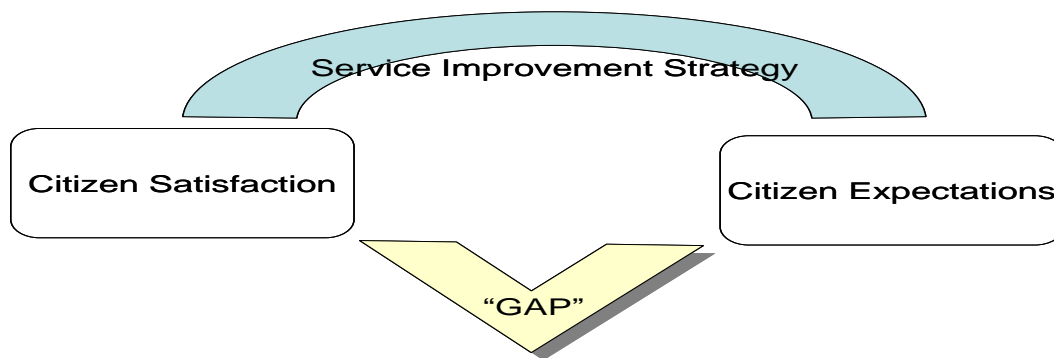


Figure 1-3: The "Expectations Gap"

Source: Dinsdale and Marson (1999:21)

The above-mentioned gap is also addressed in section 7.2.6 of the White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (or Batho Pele White Paper) where an “improvement gap” in terms of public services was discussed (Republic of South Africa, 1997). This “improvement gap” was defined as the gap between what customers want and the level and quality of current service delivery (Republic of South Africa, 1997). The “improvement gap” or “expectations gap” was analysed by the Zeithaml, Bitner and Gremler who defined it as the customer gap, which amounts to the difference between customer expectations and service perceptions (2009:32). Subsequently, authors Lovelock and Wirtz (2011:408) also investigated this service-related occurrence and referred to it as the service quality gap.

Satisfaction can be defined as an attitudinal judgement, and is determined by the use of the theory of confirmation or disconfirmation of pre-consumption expectations (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:58), which is based on the premise that consumers have certain service standards in mind before consumption. Consumers then observe service performance and compare it to their standards, to form a satisfaction judgement based on such comparison (Lovelock & Wirtz, 24

2007:58). Such judgment is labelled negative disconfirmation if the service is worse than expected, positive disconfirmation if it is better than expected and simple confirmation if it is as expected (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:59). Should there be substantial positive confirmation, consumers are likely to be delighted (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:59).

In order to address the above-mentioned expectations or improvement gap, a “gap-closure” strategy must be devised, subject to the following requirements: (a) such strategy must be anchored in an improved and in-depth understanding of what citizens’ priorities for service really are, as well as (b) a services improvement strategy for the public sector must be developed which will enable the public sector to respond effectively to these identified priorities (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:3). The Batho Pele document also mentions that closing this “expectations” or “improvement” gap should be the prime aim of any service delivery improvement programme and reiterated that such a “gap-closure” or “improvement strategy” should be required to accurately identify customers’ needs (Republic of South Africa, 1997). The Batho Pele document continues to state that it is also necessary to include accurate identification of the current service baseline in the strategy, which will enable targets to be set for improvement, taking into account the availability of resources (Republic of South Africa, 1997). These requirements clearly set the scene for the framework including citizen perceptions in public service delivery, which is the main objective that this research was aimed to achieve.

The following subsection will address communication as a key enabler for involving citizens in the evaluation of service quality. The relationship between perceptions and communication was explored and is discussed in it.

1.6.1.4. Perceptions and communication

As mentioned previously (c.f. 1.4) citizens should also be given the opportunity to be involved in service performance (Republic of South Africa, 2000). This indicates that citizen perceptions about the public sector and its related services should be included as part of the performance criteria used in assessing the public sector (Republic of South Africa, 2000). Citizen feedback on service and service satisfaction indicators could therefore be included as an additional key performance indicator (KPI) to Government performance process (Republic of South Africa, 2000). As also mentioned previously in 1.4 of this research, this consultation mechanism of Local Government (i.e. involving citizens in the service performance management process) provides the initial access point for citizen perceptions to be factored into the Government service system (Republic of South Africa, 2000).

Administrative officials in Local Government who are responsible for the execution of service delivery, cannot communicate directly to citizens but have to do so through the various municipal councils (Chuene, 2012). Citizens, in turn, have to transfer their feedback and perceptions of public services through the municipal council as is shown in Diagram 1-1 (Chuene, 2012). This diagram illustrates how citizen perceptions enter public services through Local Government, (c.f. 1.4)

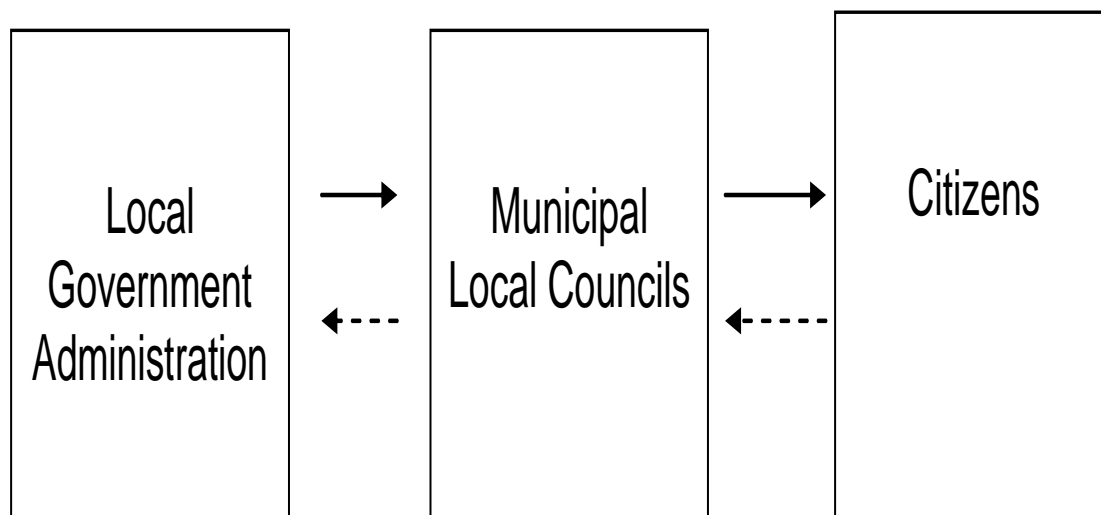


Diagram 1-1: The communication process between Local Government, council and citizens

Source: Chuene (2012)

Citizen perceptions are significant as they provide crucial input information informing decision makers, providing the next step which may lead to improvement strategies to close the gap between what citizens receive and what they think they ought to receive (Dinsdale & Marson,

1999:3). Citizen perceptions also provide decision makers with significant feedback information commenting on the reigning service delivery situation. Citizen feedback information encapsulates important details regarding citizens' rating of and overall services satisfaction (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:21) – be it negative disconfirmation, positive disconfirmation, confirmation, or delight as citizen satisfaction judgment of public services (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:59).

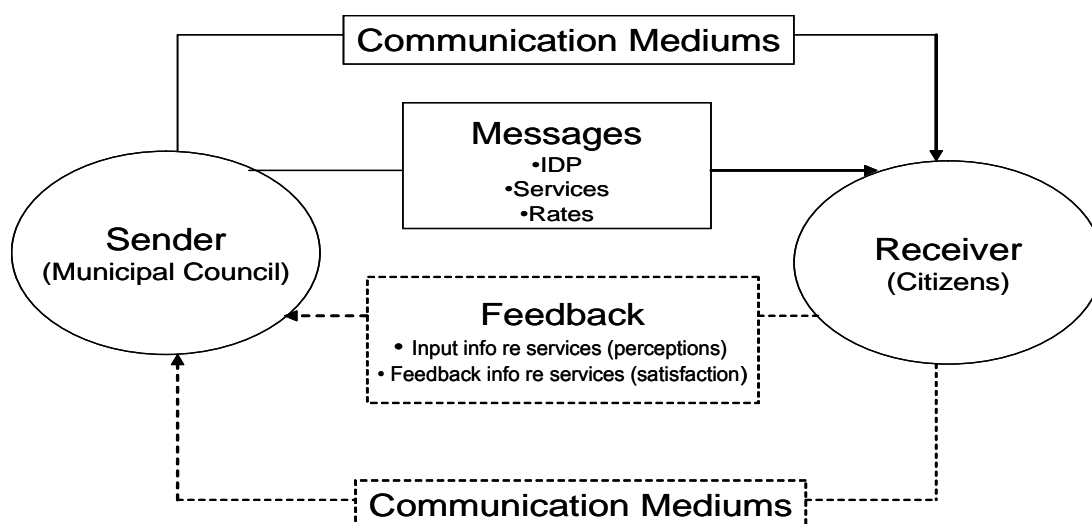


Figure1-4: A Communication Process Model: Ideal model illustrating how interaction between Local Government and citizens should operate

Adapted from Sanford et al. (1976:16); Dinsdale and Marson (1999:21); and Chuene (2012)

According to the feedback response from citizens happen at two stages,⁵ namely feedback response as (i) input information, and (ii) feedback information. This implies that Local Government requires feedback response from its citizens, firstly in the form of perceptions, which will inform and guide Local Government regarding the development of strategies to improve public services (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:v). Secondly, Government requires response in the form of feedback information regarding levels of satisfaction with services in order to address performance and service delivery (Republic of South Africa2000). Citizen evaluation therefore becomes key in obtaining citizen perceptions. A discussion of citizen evaluation and possible methods of for obtaining citizens' perceptions of service delivery are addressed in the next part of the discussion.

⁵ Also refer to section 19(2) of the Municipal Structures Act (Republic of South Africa, 1998).

1.6.1.5. Citizen evaluation: methods for obtaining citizen perceptions

Citizen evaluation of public services is gaining importance in public administrative circles as it relates directly to citizens being involved in Government decisions, and in public-services. The desire for more involvement in public service provision is directly related to the extent to which people are satisfied with services (Fitzgerald & Durant, 1980:585). In the current study, it is argued that by involving citizens in the service quality feedback process and including citizen feedback regarding their perceptions and experiences of public service delivery, will ultimately improve public services.

As mentioned previously, citizen perceptions are significant as it provides decision makers with feedback informing about the quality of public services, and enables decision-makers to improve such services (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:3). Ideally, citizens' perceptions of service delivery should be part of Government performance management processes, as discussed in 1.4 of this research. One way of incorporating perceptions is through including the results of citizen satisfaction surveys, in the form of communication or community audits (Wallace, 1994). Citizen satisfaction surveys encompass citizen evaluation of essential public services (Fitzgerald & Durant, 1980:585) and have important implications for increased access to such services, as citizens view access as a mechanism to redress past inequalities (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:53).

Citizen satisfaction surveys are an important instrument in measuring public service performance, especially for subjective outcome measurement (Chen, Li. & Wang, 2010:1). In the US, citizen surveys became popular with the expansion of public services in the 1960s (Schneider, 1976) and currently remain a prescription for improving local service provision. Research shows that 43.1 percent of cities in the US measure citizen satisfaction (Kelly & Swindell, 2002:610-621). Western public performance management theories and performance measurement techniques were introduced to China in the 1990s (Chen, et al., 2010:2). Citizen Survey as one of the performance measurement tools is widely adopted by Local Governments (Chen et al., 2010:2). Examples of these practices include the 1998 Citizen Evaluation of Government in the City of Shenyang, the 1999 Citizen Evaluation of Government in the City of Zhuhai, and the annual Citizen Satisfaction Survey for all the city public agencies in the City of Hangzhou since 2007 (Chen et al., 2010:2).

Community (or communication) audits are able to reflect citizen evaluations of Government and public services. Such evaluations are based on citizens' perceptions of basic or essential

services. Community audits have the ability to convey crucial information from the citizens of local communities to the responsible public officials regarding the quality' range' impact' and overall satisfaction with service delivery and trust in the service provider (Cole, 1975:761). Community audits are useful not only for determining citizens' satisfaction with services, but also for developing strategies to such services (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:v). It can assist in ensuring that service improvement strategies focus on those things that will make the greatest difference to citizens and help ensure that service improvement focuses on what citizens want, as opposed to what decision makers think they want (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:v), which maximises service satisfaction.

Another possible avenue for including citizens' perceptions of service delivery as part of the municipal performance process, is through the application of SERVQUAL surveys, a generic measurement tool belonging to another category of surveys referred to as relationship surveys (Zeithaml et al., 2009:151). Relationship surveys represent a very comprehensive approach because the surveys pose questions regarding all elements in the user's relationship with the service provider (i.e. service, product, and cost), and typically monitor service performance (Zeithaml et al., 2009:151). SERVQUAL surveys were developed specifically to determine service quality (Zeithaml et al., 2009:151), through measuring satisfaction with aspects of service quality (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:420). SERVQUAL is based on the philosophy that an organisation's service quality can be evaluated by comparing users' perceptions of the service received with their own expectations (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:420).

Criticism against SERVQUAL includes that it can only render credible results when its dimensions and measures are customised to the specific research context (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:421). Measuring customer perceptions of quality can also be complicated – it has been found that SERVQUAL in reality only measures functional and technical quality (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:420). In spite of its limitations, this measuring tool provides a solid foundation for quality measurement, as it identifies some of the key service quality assessment constructs and dimensions (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:421). It is also generic and can be applied across a broad spectrum of service industries (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:420). The service quality dimensions will be elaborated on in 2.3 of this research.

When discussing service quality, one should also consider total quality management (TQM), a philosophy for continuous improvement (Harvey & Brown, 2001:366). It is an organisational strategy for commitment to improving satisfaction of users by developing procedures to specifically manage output quality and integrates the desires of individuals for growth and development with organisational goals (Harvey & Brown, 2001: 366). TQM applies human

resources and analytical tools to focus on meeting and possibly exceeding user expectations (Harvey& Brown, 2001: 366). TQM is system wide; depends on structured change; believes in empowerment and involvement; bases decision making on data-based activities; and views people as having the innate desire to contribute meaningfully (Harvey& Brown, 2001:367-368).

Judging from this definition and description of TQM, it is evident that, although TQM relates closely to service quality, this study did not involve it as TQM is more closely related to internal or organisational commitment to improved service quality. This study also focused on improving service quality, but from an external viewpoint, namely including users' (citizens') inputs on service quality in order to improve the quality of public services. TQM may subsequently be employed as a change management initiative to bring into effect organisational commitment to service quality improvement.

Satisfaction with services is driven by a number of factors which account for over 70 percent of the variation in clients' service quality ratings and include timeliness of the services received; knowledge and competence of the staff; courtesy; fairness; and outcome (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:33). These factors or drivers could possibly be utilised in the development of a framework within which community audits can be based. Alongside these driving factors, the Batho Pele principles promoting enhanced service delivery can also be applied to form the basis of community audits. The principles include consultation; setting service standards; increased access; courtesy; providing information; transparency; redress; and value for money (Republic of South Africa, 1997) and provide measures for assessing public service quality (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:53). This means that these principles not only guide the manner in which essential services are distributed by Government or other private agencies, but may also serve as a yardstick for measuring how essential services are rendered (Roberts & Hemson, 2008 53).

The 'Batho Pele' or 'people first' (Republic of South Africa, 1997) was adopted to serve a framework of democratic principles (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:53). The principles and their corresponding attitudinal statement are summarised in Table 1-2 (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54). These attitudinal statements were developed by the South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) to facilitate public assessment and evaluation of the degree to which the service delivery principles are being implemented by municipalities during service delivery, in this way developing a tool for citizen evaluation of public services (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:53-54).

Table 1-2: The Batho Pele principles and what it means for public sector institutions

| Batho Pele principles | Application |
|---------------------------|---|
| Consultation | Consult with communities on basic services |
| Setting service standards | Provision of quality basic services |
| Increasing access | Working towards giving all South Africans equal access to services |
| Courtesy | Treating all people with respect |
| Providing information | Striving to disseminate information regarding services |
| Openness and transparency | Providing regular feedback on its performance in delivering services |
| Redress | Responding to complaints regarding service delivery Following up on service delivery complaints Providing solutions for problems and complaints |
| Value for money | People getting good value for the money they are charged for basic services |

Source: Adapted from Roberts and Hemson (2008:54)

When applied, the principle of *consultation* refers to the dialogue between Government and its citizens regarding essential services, as well as consideration and respect for citizens' opinions and viewpoints with regard to basic services (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54). The *courtesy* principle reiterates the importance of *consultation* – treating people with respect (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54) goes hand in hand with due consideration of their viewpoints and listening to them. In the long term, the process of consultation strives towards a deeper understanding and greater sensitivity towards citizens' service needs; in this way assisting (through consultation) in the development of citizen-oriented public service delivery.

The *redress* principle, where the focus is on service recovery, aims to rectify where Government failed to listen to citizens' service inputs and concerns (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54). *Redress* entails receiving and responding to service complaints, as well as following through with the process by ensuring that complaints have been satisfactorily actioned and resolved (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54).

The principles of *openness and transparency* as well as *providing information* both refer to that which Government communicates to its citizens regarding public services (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54). Communication with citizens is a two-way process and the aforementioned principles relate to the communication *openness and transparency* refer to regular service performance feedback from Government; whilst *providing information* relates to the dissemination of service information to citizens (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54). Both

instances relate to Government communications regarding what they are able to perform or what they are busy performing for citizens as far as services are concerned.

The application of setting service standards is not made very clear (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54) and simply refers to service standards as the provision of basic services. In section 4.2 of the Batho Pele White Paper document, service standards are defined as measures for the level and quality of services which ought to be realistic, relevant, precise and measurable (Republic of South Africa, 1997). The application of this principle could be constructed as the setting of realistic and measurable service quality standards (Republic of South Africa, 1997).

In the next part of the discussion, closer attention will be paid to the assessment of the quality of public services, which is important because the aim is not only to explore ways of obtaining citizen perceptions, but also to include these perceptions in the municipal service performance evaluation, as required by the Constitution (Republic of South Africa, 1996). A deeper understanding of the service quality assessment process in the SA Government may assist in this endeavour. Examples of service quality assessment includes the Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP); the Frontline Service Delivery Monitoring (FSDM) operational framework; and the Batho Pele principles which will be discussed in more detail in 1.6.2 of this research.

1.6.2. Service quality assessment in the SA Public Sector

The SDBIP as defined by the MFMA contains elements of service quality assessment and is one example of a public service quality assessment mechanism (Republic of South Africa, 2003). Municipalities are required to develop SDIPs as strategic financial management tools to ensure that decisions based on the outcomes of municipal budgets are aligned with the priorities encapsulated in the IDP's of municipalities (Ethekwini Municipality, 2009:1).⁶ The responsibility for implementing the SDBIP rests with the Internal Audit Department of the municipal administration (Chuene, 2012).

⁶ The IDP is a comprehensive, strategic planning tool for assessing municipal service delivery and infrastructure development (Koma & Kuye 2014:101). It is connected (through implementation plans) to an annual municipal budget that sets out the amounts each Department can spend on specific pre-determined items (Waterberg District Municipality, 2017:10). The IDP allocates timelines; cost estimates and responsible individuals to each implementation step in order to materialise the set development objectives and various strategies involved in this process (Koma & Kuye 2014:100-101).

Section 1 of the MFMA prescribes that the SDBIP is to be approved by the municipal mayor in terms of section 153 (1)(c)(ii), for the purposes of (a) implementing and distributing public services, and (b) implementing the annual municipal budget (Republic of South Africa, 2003). An SDBIP typically consists of the following components (Ethekewini Municipality, 2009:1-3):

- Projections of monthly revenue that need to be collected (by source) and monthly operational and capital expenditure (by vote);
- Quarterly service delivery targets and performance indicators; and
- Other matters that may be prescribed, including any revisions of the SDBIP by the mayor as described in section 53 (1)(c)(ii) (Republic of South Africa, 2003).

Figure 1-5 illustrates the working of the SDBIP as well as how the SDBIP relates to the municipal administration and the Council.

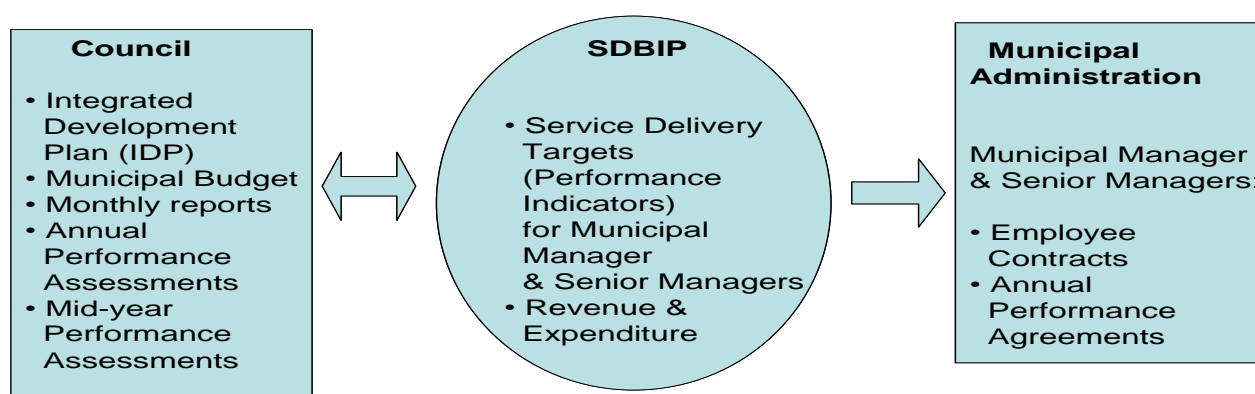


Figure 1-5: Internal communication process within Local Government: Communication process between the municipal council and its administration.

Source: Adapted from Ethekewini Municipality (2009:2).

In terms of the functioning of the SDBIP, quarterly service delivery targets are produced which are then reported to (a) facilitate oversight in terms of fiscal and non-fiscal performance of the municipality; and (b) ensure the implementation of the IDP (Ethekewini Municipality, 2009:1). The SDBIP forms the basis of annual performance contracts (for the municipal manager and senior management), and provides the foundation for annual and quarterly performance (Ethekewini Municipality, 2009:1).

The SDBIP, as mentioned earlier, serves to oversee and assess the implementation of public service delivery efforts as illustrated above, but without the inputs of its end-users, namely local citizens. When referring back to Figure 1-5, it is clear that targets are set and monitored but there is no mechanism to facilitate the flow of information on performance as experienced

by citizens (Ethekwini Municipality, 2009:1). Citizens provide inputs regarding services by way of a public participation process, during service prioritisation when the IDP is developed (Ethekwini Municipality, 2009:1); but little other opportunity for citizen participation exists after the services have been received. As mentioned earlier, the benefit of information gained from citizen participation could potentially provide public managers with useful insights and tools regarding service delivery.

Another example of a public service assessment mechanism is the FSDM operational framework by the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME). The DPME is mandated to facilitate the development of delivery agreements for the cross-cutting priorities and to monitor and evaluate the implementation of these plans (Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation, 2015:7).

The DPME is responsible for monitoring the performance of individual; national; and provincial government departments and municipalities (Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation, 2015:7). It also performs certain key evaluations and generally promotes good monitoring and evaluation practices in Government (Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation, 2015:7). Finally, the DPME monitors the quality of the FSDM operational framework (through unannounced visits) monitors the quality of services produced at selected public sector sites and in this way, enables the Department to verify the outputs and outcomes of service delivery agreements (Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation, 2015:7). This assessment process involves interviews with citizens and staff and findings are presented to the relevant sector departments and Cabinet at least once a year (Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation, 2015:7).

Another example of service quality assessment is the Batho Pele principles (Republic of South Africa, 1997). The Batho Pele principles, as mentioned before, emphasise that active citizen involvement is necessary to create a service-oriented culture and that Government require constant feedback from the recipients of public services if they are to improve service delivery (Venter et al., 2007:113). Citizen involvement in the form of citizen satisfaction surveys or community / communication audits as discussed in 1.3.1.5 of this research study, are aimed at improving not only the provision of essential services but also the performance process as it strives to give important feedback about public perceptions of municipal services. It is for this very reason that citizen satisfaction surveys are known as a performance measurement tool (Chen et al., 2010:2).

1.6.3. Communication

By introducing the concept of communication to citizen evaluation, it is intended that communication will function as a catalyst to close the “expectations gap” between citizen perceptions and their expectations (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:21) as discussed previously in 1.6.1.3. Communication is therefore key to this theoretical structure or framework because it links perceptions and expectations.

In its broadest sense, communication includes all those processes by which people influence one another (Ruesch & Bateson, 1951:6). Communication refers to a two-way process during which information, including feedback information, is transferred from one party to another through a communication channel (Schwella, Burger, Fox & Müller, 1996:228). For the purposes of this research, the concept of communication was explored within the parameters of participatory developmental communication and political communication.

Participatory development communication (Besette, 2004) is defined as a form of communication which occurs during development initiatives aimed at Government, NGO and community-based organisations. Barker (2001:5-6) uses the term participatory communication with reference to developmental processes and public participation strategies as vehicles for communication.

Participatory development communication supports interactive co-operation between Government and local communities (Steyn & Nunes, 2001:30) through the use of participatory media channels such as community radio, street theatre, film material and commuter channels (Barker, 2001:9-11). This interaction between Government and local communities is essential, and Swanepoel and De Beer (1996:ix) emphasised that all development efforts will come to nothing if communication breaks down.

SA Government operate in a developmental environment and need to communicate meaningfully with local communities to enable effective participation and ultimately make basic services accessible to all people. The meaningfulness of public participation largely depends on local communities being adequately informed and being able to transmit their views and concerns to all institutions and bodies involved in the development initiative (Kellerman, 1997:53), which includes service delivery.

Political communication encompasses purposeful interaction about political affairs, which includes communication by voters addressed to politicians and other political actors (McNair,

1999:4). The allocation of public services and revenues is as much a political matter as it is a humanistic matter, as argued by Swanepoel (1997:2). In order to provide people with an escape from the deprivation trap and have their basic physical needs met, extensive communication externally (between communities and Government) and internally (within Government) is required from all parties involved. Political communication provides a framework for Government interactions with citizens regarding political matters such as public services, which will be utilised to include this important aspect (McNair, 1999:4).

1.7. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study was aimed at achieving the following objectives: Firstly, it was planned as an attempt to attain an understanding of the background for this study and factors that assisted in shaping the research question(s); the conceptual framework; the research objectives; design and methodology; and the proposed structure of this thesis.

Another objective included the development of a literature overview of the key concepts involved in the research, in order to establish the theoretical framework. The key theoretical concepts on which this study is based includes citizen evaluation; service quality evaluation; public services; and communication.

Thirdly, this research will aim to provide an overview and analysis of the extent to which citizen perceptions are taken into account in the SA public value system. The reason for this will be to determine the influence of citizen participation and perception on public service processes, and if citizen perceptions have been adequately incorporated in the public service value system. This research will aim to also investigate if there are other factors which hinders the effective incorporation of citizen participation in the public service value system.

A fourth objective involves an investigation of the role of perceptions in public service quality assessment. It is generally understood that a good service quality performance assessment consists of both measurable organisational service outputs (i.e. “hard” measures) and service perceptions (i.e. “soft” measures) (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:426). For this purpose, an analysis of case literature reviewing research contributions from previous service delivery surveys will be undertaken. The objective is to compare the various survey service quality outcomes and to identify trends and common themes in terms of the survey results. A key focus of this analysis will be to ascertain the contribution of perception surveys (such as citizen satisfaction surveys or community audits) in terms of public service assessment, and if these surveys are able to produce results that can provide a different perspective.

Fifthly, the study was aimed at designing a framework or plan to enable the assessment and improvement of service delivery quality through the integration of “soft” service measures by including citizen perceptions. The ultimate goal was to enable public organisations to perform quality assess of services by using the information gained from citizens’ perceptions about such services in order to (a) determine which factors prevent effective and efficient service

delivery (Zeithaml et al., 2009:44); and (b) to strategically advise managers on how to best improve public service delivery (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:v).

The framework would need to be supported and informed by an implementation strategy (Republic of South Africa, 1997) and another research objective was therefore to develop a service improvement strategy aimed at addressing the service quality gaps or shortcomings (Zeithaml et al., 2009:31-42); creating quality dimensions suitable for the public sector (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:420); and establishing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to oversee the implementation of the improvement strategy (Civicus & PG Exchange, 2012:2).

The introduction of a diagnostic instrument to determine which factors prevent effective and efficient service delivery and influence service quality (Zeithaml et al., 2009:44) constituted another objective of this research. The diagnostic instrument was to be designed to classify service quality problems under a number of problem areas relating to organisational service performance and capabilities (Zeithaml et al., 2009:34-43), and be suitable to assess organisational competencies (Zeithaml et al., 2009:44).

Finally, this chapter will also devote time to analysing the role of communication (with specific reference to development communication) in citizen evaluation and service quality improvement.

Intended contributions

The intended contribution of this research is to ascertain whether the inclusion of citizen perceptions into public service value systems is able to provide a unique perspective in terms of public service quality assessment. The ultimate goal would be to provide public sector decision makers with a more holistic view of service quality which includes both quantitative data (e.g. how many new water or electricity connections) and qualitative data (e.g. how satisfied are citizens with water or electricity services). Another intended contribution includes the development of a framework for factoring in citizen perceptions in local public service-value systems.

1.8. RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design is qualitative, and include a content analysis (Mouton, 2001: 165) of official documents and public records (Patton, 2003:2). The content of these sources were examined in a systematic way, to record frequencies of communicated themes that were utilised in this research (Welman & Kruger, 2002:195). Furthermore, the research design was empirical and relied on data that was secondary and textual by nature (Mouton, 2001:165-166). The design required a low degree of control (Mouton, 2001:144).

Figure:1-6 shows a diagrammatical representation of the research design.

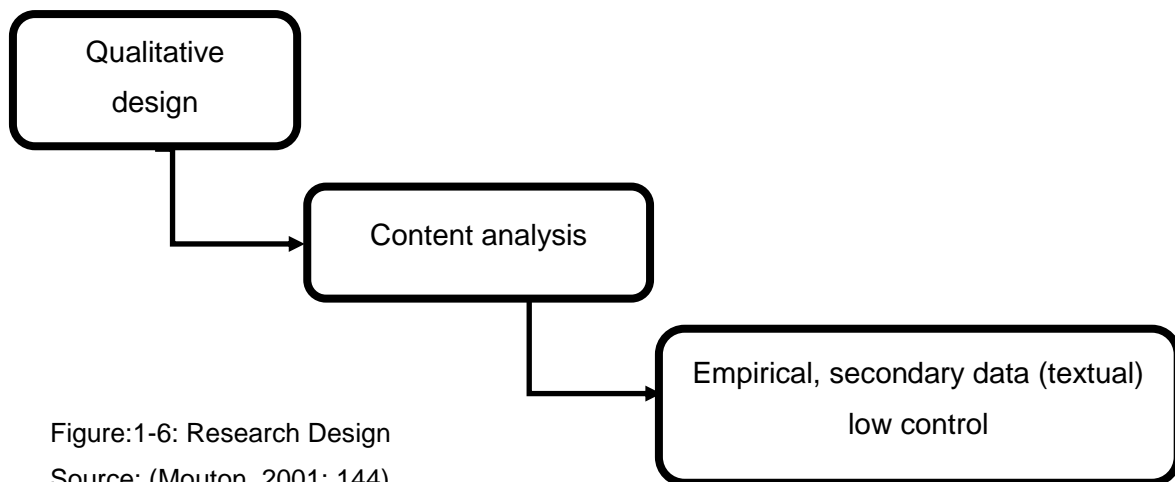


Figure:1-6: Research Design
Source: (Mouton, 2001: 144)

A limitation to this design was that the (qualitative) data that was produced by the institutional feedback surveys (e.g. the Munidex and the community surveys) responded to the officially stated public service delivery goals, but did not respond to the extent to which citizens' real needs relating to public service delivery were being met and that they were satisfied were with the service quality (which was the true aim of this research). Upon further investigation, it was found that the (qualitative) data produced by the perception-based studies (e.g. the Tshwane, OR Tambo and SASAS case studies) provided more insight into the extent to which citizens' real needs relating to public service delivery were being met and whether they were satisfied with services.

1.9. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this research includes the following.

1.9.1. Data collection methods

The data that was applied in this research included mainly secondary data, but some primary data was also introduced to the research through an expert interview (Chuene, 2012). The interview served as a sound boarding technique, where the interviewer tested the research concept and questions in order to maximise its practical relevance for the industry on a person or expert. The interviewee was a peer (or co-expert) and was head of the internal audit division of Ekurhuleni metropolitan municipality. The nature of the interview was a systematising interview and based on industry expertise and the exclusive position of the interviewee (Bogner, Littig & Menz, 2009:18-19). A disadvantage of this interview type was that the facts and data was limited to specific field (i.e. that of municipal service delivery). In terms of the interview ethics, no confidential information was divulged and no anonymity was required.

Secondary data was mainly collected through document analysis of official documents and public records (Patton, 2003:2). This included secondary data such as previous research (perception-based surveys and institutional feedback surveys – see 4.2); official government documents; official statistics and SA legislation and policy documents (Welman & Kruger, 2002:144, 178). Measurement was therefore unobtrusive, i.e. indirectly observing service improvement endeavours by describing; analysing and interpreting them whilst establishing trends and patterns (Welman & Kruger, 2002:143).

Other forms of secondary data that were used in this study included previous research that was employed included survey findings regarding Government service delivery performance and citizen perceptions (including satisfaction indications) regarding such performance (Roefs, Du Toit & Schwabe, 2006:16; Hawes & Mohamed, 2009:1)]⁷ Such previous research includes the use of rating scales (Welman et al., 2002:142). The Batho Pele Index (BPI), an attitudinal rating scale (Welman & Kruger, 2002:147) was introduced by South African Social Attitudes Studies (SASAS) to enable systematic public assessment of the degree to which

⁷ The Munidex was compiled from data sourced from Statistics SA and compared the results of Community Survey 2007 with Census 2001 (Hawes & Mohamed, 2009:1). Data from the South African Social Attitudes Survey, which gathers information on the public's attitudes; values and behavioural patterns was also heavily relied upon (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:53).

municipalities adhere to the Batho Pele principles as far as basic household service provision is concerned (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54). The BPI is represented by a summated scale of responses to nine statements which are based on the Batho Pele statements (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54). Another rating scale that was applied included the priority index (P-Index) which was used for prioritising citizen needs in terms of municipal performance and service delivery (Mouton, 2004:55-56).

Furthermore, other secondary data included performance indicators (Welman & Kruger, 2002:142) such as the Munidex which measures the performance of municipalities, district councils, metropolitan municipalities and provinces (Hawes & Mohamed, 2009:1). Another indicator that was used in both this study as well as previous research studies (Hawes & Mohamed, 2009:1) was Stats SA (Statistics SA, 2015).

1.9.2. Sampling

Testing of the preliminary findings was performed on pre-existing (i.e. secondary) data from previous research in the institutional feedback and perception-based surveys (see 4.2) regarding public services assessment. The researcher found such data contained to be both “rich” (i.e. intricate, detailed, nuanced) and “thick” (plentiful) which sufficed for the purposes of this research. During data sampling, a selection of perception-based studies, institutional (non-perception) studies and a combination of the two has purposively been made with the specific aim to compare the effects and results of including and excluding citizen perception when assessing service delivery. The purposive sampling strategy that was applied included criterion sampling, where a selection of case examples that met the above-mentioned research criteria, was made (Patton, 2003:4-5).

The data sampling was performed on a saturation basis which determined the sample size. This means that the researcher took what was available until the point at which no new data, themes, or coding were found (Fusch & Ness, 2015:1409). For this purpose, a saturation grid was utilised (Fusch & Ness, 2015:1410). A potential risk is posed in the use of secondary data relying on the fact that researchers in those studies have reached data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015:1409). In order to minimise this risk, the expert interview (Chuene, 2012) also served the purpose of ensuring data saturation, apart from validating research data (Fusch & Ness, 2015:1409). Purposive sampling was employed for the selection of the expert interview (Welman & Kruger, 2002:63).

1.9.3. Data analysis and interpretation of data

Data from previous research (see 4.2) or case examples were analysed by means of systematic coding and was organised and summarised according to themes (Welman & Kruger, 2002:189). The themes that were utilised in the comparative analyses included relationships between the perceived levels of service; geographic variances; access to basic services; socio-economic disparities and municipal perceptions (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:55-60). The various themes will be discussed in greater detail in 4.3 of this research document.

1.9.4. Operationalisation of the research design

The operationalisation of the research design includes (a) a document analysis (which relied on accidental sampling and unobtrusive measurement) that provided a basis for the literature study in chapter 2 as well as chapter 3 and (b) a comparative analysis (based on themes) of selected case examples (chapter 4) which revealed how the qualitative data (i.e. data from perception-based case examples) provides deeper insight into service quality issues, whilst the quantitative data (i.e. data from institutional feedback case examples) is able to provide an overview of the state of service quality. Both types of data were required to provide a comprehensive service quality assessment.

The following chapter, the service improvement strategy, was then designed on the basis of what is learnt from the comparative analyses in chapter 4. This means that a process of triangulation was employed to verify the data. The comparative analysis in chapter 4 examined secondary data on the research topic and informed the development of the diagnostic instrument, strategy and framework. The researcher was able to make adaptations to the research to benefit from data which the researcher only became aware of during the research process (Welman & Kruger, 2002:182).

1.10. OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

The research is structured according to six chapters which included the research concept; the literature review; citizen perceptions in the SA public service value system; an overview of public service quality surveys; and the service improvement framework and strategy as well as the conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter 1 provided the background to the study and introduced the research concept. It is focused on public services and the public sector; the state of public services giving rise to citizen dissatisfaction; the enabling legislative framework for this study; the research questions; the theoretical framework introducing the key concepts on which the research was based; the research objectives which the study aimed to address; the research methodology and the design employed to address the research questions.

Chapter 2 consists of a literature overview of the theoretical framework of the research and its composite key concepts. This includes theoretical inputs regarding public services and the nature of the public sector; citizen evaluation; service quality assessment; citizen evaluation and its relationship to perception; as well as communication.

Chapter 3 provides an overview and analysis of the extent to which citizen perceptions are taken into account in the SA public value system.

Chapter 4 addresses the case examples and focuses on providing an overview of a selection of public service assessment surveys. An analysis of results from previous service delivery surveys in terms of “hard” and “soft” service quality measures and their related outcomes was conducted to identify trends and common themes.

Chapter 5 introduces the development of a service quality framework based on the key findings of the literature review and the case literature. The framework includes dimensions of service quality specifically adapted for the public sector to facilitate service assessment. A diagnostic instrument to identify service quality problems is included in the framework. The service quality framework concludes with a service improvement strategy and plan to narrow the gap between expected and perceived service, which is at the heart of most service dissatisfaction.

Chapter 6 concludes this study with some of the key findings of and key contributions made by this research. This chapter also highlights the future applications where these findings and contributions could be utilised and developed to a greater extent. Lastly, some key limitations that applied to this study will be discussed.

1.11. CONCLUSION

This chapter was aimed at providing an understanding of the background for this study, and factors that assisted in shaping the research question(s); the conceptual framework; the research objectives; the design and methodology; and the proposed structure of this thesis. This chapter therefore provided an understanding of the outline of this research. The following chapter will focus on the literature overview and analyse the composite theoretical concepts of the overarching theoretical framework on which this research will be based.

2. CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1.INTRODUCTION

This literature review is aimed at not only providing an adequate level of knowledge on recent, relevant and credible scholarship (Mouton, 2001:86-87), but also to analyse the composite theoretical concepts of the overarching theoretical framework on which this research is based. By analysing the composite theoretical concepts, the connection between these concepts and how they complement each other to address the research questions are explored. As previously mentioned, the theoretical concepts involve public services; citizen perceptions; service quality assessment (specifically in public domain); and communication (as discussed in 1.6 of this document).

This chapter will aim to address each theoretical concept and explore how it relates to the research questions. In the next part of the discussion, the concept of public services will be analysed to ascertain if the nature of a service has an impact on its quality and the assessment thereof.

2.2.PUBLIC SERVICES

Services generally refer to deeds, processes, and performances which are provided or co-produced by one entity for the benefit of another entity (Zeithaml et al., 2009:4). Services include all economic activities with an output that is not a physical product; which are generally consumed at the time it is produced; and that provides added value in forms that are intangible to its purchaser (for example convenience, amusement, timeliness, comfort, and health) (Zeithaml et al., 2009:4). Services can also be seen as “products” representing a range of intangible offerings that customers value and pay for in the market place (Zeithaml et al., 2009:4). The intangibility of many services renders it more difficult to conduct services evaluation (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007: 420). This point is elaborated on in the section on service assessment.

The purpose in this discussion is to explore the nature of public services as distinct from private services and in doing so, to attempt to ascertain critical aspects that need to be considered when dealing with the measurement of service quality and service perceptions. This is an important step in the research process because, while the nature of services may differ, the

critical service and quality aspects are the same for both public and private sectors. It also means that there are useful experiences for the public sector to draw from private sector service measurement, as the latter has globally made significant advancements in service quality measurement and the provision of satisfying service experiences to their customers.

In order to measure public service quality, a clear understanding needs to be gathered regarding what components need to be measured and how to analyse the gap. In this part of the discussion, closer attention will also be paid to the Batho Pele principles and their application as possible public service quality assessment measures.

2.2.1. Distinguishing Public from Private Services

Public services are defined as those services that cannot be rendered by the private sector due to the collective nature of such services and the fact that such services are necessary for Government to attain its objectives (Gildenhuis & Knipe, 2000:57). Such services can be delivered more cost-effectively and more advantageously by collective effort than by individual effort (Gildenhuis & Knipe, 2000:57). In most cases, government limits its involvement to those goods or services that cannot be efficiently produced or consumed in its absence (i.e. market failure), or for which there is a legal, national security or public trust reason for government delivery (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:13-14).

Further distinctions are apparent in the use of the private sector term “customer” and the public sector term “citizen” (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:5). Unlike most of their public sector counterparts, private sector businesses must earn a profit to survive and provide its customers with unique treatment, often putting certain customers above others (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:5). The public sector, on the other hand, does not aim to capture a profit or plays favourites with its citizens (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:5). This requires that all citizens receive the same level of service to ensure the adherence to democratic values (e.g., accountability, loyalty, the rule of law), to principles of natural justice (fairness, due process, impartiality) and to horizontal equity (equal treatment of people of different groups and regions) (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:5).

In the private sector, the direct recipient of a service (i.e. the customer) receives all the benefits from a given service - such benefits do not flow to others or the public at large (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:6). In the case of many public services, however, especially in the areas of regulation and enforcement, a large portion of the benefits flow to citizens at large, not to the direct recipient of the service (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:6).

The term “public” typically refers to the public collectively; public interest; publics as groups of people; public spaces or realms; and public institutions (Newman & Clarke, 2009:11). The meaning of the terms “public” were taken even further to include “public” as a central organising concept (Taylor, 2004, as cited in Newman & Clarke, 2009:11). This idea is reiterated by Moore, who believes that, although individuals are the core elements of society, some collective decisions also have to be made (2013:60). It has also been argued that the meanings of public and private are not merely descriptive and normative; but also, cultural categories that help shape social identities and relationships (Newman & Clarke, 2009:11).

Public and private sometimes compete, sometimes complement each other, and sometimes are merely part of a larger series of classifications that include local, domestic, personal, political, economic and intimate. Almost every cultural change has left a new sedimentary layer in the meaning of private and public (Warner, 2002:28, as cited in Newman & Clarke, 2009:12).

Newman and Clarke explore the concept of ‘publicness’ which is also useful to the debate of “public versus private” and what is referred to as ‘public’ (2009:1-3). ‘Publicness’ is used as a way of talking about the combination of things, ideas, issues, people, relationships, practices and sites that have been made public, i.e. a focus for collective action (Newman & Clarke, 2009: 1-2). Such things, issues, and people get “made ‘public’” by processes of *making visible* matters of connective concern, thereby also creating public issues, which means that publics (i.e. groups of people as previously-mentioned) take interest in them (Newman & Clarke, 2009:2).

Newman and Clarke also point out that the concept of “publicness” has been deconstructed in the sense that its chain of connections (i.e. representative politics, power, paternalism and public accountability) has been dismantled and is replaced by the use of agencies, privatized public-private partnerships, and the creation of markets and quasi-markets (2009:2-3). This implies that partners and co-producers are introduced to the public value stream to collaborate with Government in providing alternative ways of delivering services whilst still realising social outcomes (Bennington & Moore, 2011:47).

In the event of assuming responsibility for a new activity, there are various possibilities of dealing with such change: the new activity may be contracted out; it may be undertaken within the public bureaucracy, or government may choose to join with other organisations to jointly

perform such an activity (Gildenhuis & Knipe, 2000:64). It is worthwhile to have a brief look at alternative service delivery mechanisms, in the context of service improvement.

Government has several types of delivery systems to choose from when it comes to service provision or delivery, which includes (Gildenhuis & Knipe, 2000:65) voluntarism; market place; external suppliers; private contractors; third-sector organisations and other domestic governments (Gildenhuis & Knipe, 2000:65-67).

2.2.1.1. Voluntarism

With voluntarism, individuals offer their services without expecting compensation, reward or a profit (Gildenhuis & Knipe, 2000:65). Volunteers are not necessarily skilled, but make up for it in enthusiasm and the fact that they do from a good heart (Gildenhuis & Knipe, 2000:65). Modern societies draw on voluntarism to a lesser extent than traditional societies did, but all societies in truth require some extent of voluntarism in order to meet public demands, and it constitutes a potent force to be mobilised, particularly in emergency events (Gildenhuis & Knipe, 2000:65). The downside of voluntarism is that it is risky and unreliable (i.e. volunteers may withdraw their offerings at any point in time) and can therefore not be subjected to the rigorous demands of quality performance required by modern society (Gildenhuis & Knipe, 2000:65).

2.2.1.2. Market place

In the instance of the private market place, private entrepreneurs may respond to community needs, usually in exchange for some personal gain, and in this way creating a contractual obligation between the individual and the entrepreneur (Gildenhuis & Knipe, 2000:66). The needs in question are individual rather than community needs, and have the disadvantage that only those who can afford it are able to contract with private entrepreneurs and therefore not all can benefit from this unless they are prepared to pay the going rate. The goods and services which are provided have to be highly divisible and capable of being divided into units for a price per unit to be charged.

2.2.1.3. External suppliers

Due to lack of resources, technical expertise and experience, some governments may find themselves in the predicament of not being able to meet certain community needs, in which case such governments tend to turn to foreign agencies, entrepreneurs and even other countries to meet the domestic needs (Gildenhuis & Knipe, 2000:66). This represents one way of filling domestic needs-based vacuums, but has the obvious disadvantages of creating dependency relationships with the external providers; being subjected to unpredictable and prolonged interruptions of supplied services and complicated preconditions; and contractual arrangements with external suppliers (Gildenhuis & Knipe, 2000:66).

2.2.1.4. Other domestic governments

Public organisations can allow other public organisations (from the same country) to deliver services within their jurisdiction, e.g. federal agencies delegate to regional and Local Governments, whilst local and regional governments rely on federal agencies to deliver services which they can no longer afford to provide (Gildenhuis & Knipe, 2000:66). Governments at the same level also enter into various agreements amongst themselves to share in service delivery and economise on overhead costs (Gildenhuis & Knipe, 2000:66).

2.2.1.5. Private contractors

Governments may also choose to avoid the complications of direct delivery by contracting with private organisations, and allowing them to render the service on behalf of government. This is referred to as outsourcing and is discussed in greater detail in the section specifically set aside for that (Gildenhuis & Knipe, 2000:67-69).

2.2.1.6. Third-sector organisations

To simplify processes of public management and contract managing private entrepreneurs, governments also rely on non-profit private or quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations to supply public services (Gildenhuis & Knipe, 2000:67). Third-sector organisations (i.e. those non-profit private or quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations supplying public services) are increasing in importance (Gildenhuis & Knipe, 2000:69). Many of these organisations have tax exempt status because they are established

for charitable, religious, scientific and educational purposes (Gildenhuis & Knipe, 2000:69). The functional scope of third-sector organisations include initiating and nurturing innovation (especially in human service delivery); developing public policy; supporting local interests; providing those services which government is constitutionally barred from providing; overseeing government to prevent the arbitrary exercise of power and bureaucratic aggrandizement at the expense of voluntarism; overseeing the market place; bringing the public and private sectors together; giving aid abroad where public agencies and multinational corporations are not welcome; and encouraging active citizenship (Gildenhuis & Knipe, 2000:70).

Third-sector organisations play a crucial role in innovation areas where public organisations lack knowledge or are afraid to venture, and often also test new services and alternative organisational structures (Gildenhuis & Knipe, 2000:70). Third-sector organisations are also viewed as instruments of social change, and draw attention to felt needs for social change, as well as raise public and government concern about the problem (Gildenhuis & Knipe, 2000:70).

2.2.1.7. Co-production

Co-production (i.e. active production), is the exact opposite of consumerism or using (i.e. passive receiving) – consumer versus “prosumer” (Alford, 2009:1-3). Co-production implies “self-help” and alters the role of government in terms of service delivery from “rowing” to “steering” (Alford, 2009:7). Co-production refers to any active behaviour by anybody outside of government that is independent of government agency production but is prompted by some action of such agency; is at least partly voluntary; and intentionally or unintentionally creates private and/or public value in the form of outcomes (Alford, 2009:7, 23). There are three broad types of co-production, namely: citizens requesting assistance from public agencies (e.g. the police or fire brigade); citizens providing assistance to public agents (e.g. volunteers), which may also include enhanced co-production with public agencies in existing citizen actions; and citizens and agents interacting to adjust the service expectations of each other (e.g. teachers and students) (Alford, 2009:17).

According to Alford, co-production encourages citizenship because citizens also co-produce by setting the social and physical conditions in which services are delivered (2009:17-18). Co-production becomes applicable when it is a means by which government offloads the delivery of services to the communities in order to reduce government spending (Alford, 2009:24). The

key issue in this case is whether services are interdependent (i.e. education depending on the joint activities of teachers and students), or whether such services are substitutive (e.g. garbage collection where garbage collectors and citizens are substituted for each other in terms of carrying the garbage to the relevant collection points) (Alford, 2009:24). Co-production appears appropriate when its potential benefits outweighs the costs involved (Alford, 2009:25).

In subsection 2.2.1, the emphasis has been on the exploration of the “publicness” of public services as being distinct from private services. The deconstruction and elaboration of what includes “public” was also explored. The next subsection elaborates on this theme in focusing on the nature of public or collective services.

2.2.2. The Nature of Public services

The most distinct difference between public and private sector services is determined by the nature of the services in question. Services can be classified as particular, collective or quasi-collective services (Gildenhuis & Knipe, 2000:57). Collective and quasi-collective services normally resort under public services, whilst particular services fall under private sector services (Gildenhuis & Knipe, 2000:57, 59). The mere fact that a service is rendered by a public sector organisation does not necessarily mean that such service is a public service (Gildenhuis 2000:60); it has to adhere to specific requirements which are set out in the following table. Table 1-3 attempts to explain the key differences between collective and particular services (Gildenhuis & Knipe, 2000:57-59).

Table 1-3: Public versus private services: comparison between collective and particular services

| Collective services | Particular services |
|---|---|
| Services are non-apportionable and cannot be divided into measurable consumption units, which means it is difficult to cost it according to market price. | Services are apportionable, and the utilisation thereof can be apportioned according to a quantifiable unit for which a price per unit can be determined according to the cost of its supply. |
| Services are non-exclusive and citizens and members of public can under no circumstances be excluded from using such services. | Services are exclusive, which means that non-payers can be excluded from using them. |
| Services are inexhaustible, and cannot become depleted in the process of usage, but should nonetheless be maintained to remain available. | Services are exhaustible and can disappear during the course of consumption, which means that they should constantly be replenished. |

| | |
|--|---|
| Services can be financed by taxation only because a price per unit is difficult to establish. Taxpayers do not receive commensurate value in return for the value of the tax they pay. | Services are usually financed by user tariffs and consumers receive a commensurate value in terms of service units. |
| Services are monopolistic, which means that governments hold monopolies on such services and no competition exists, except between government bodies. | Unless government monopolises a service through legislation, no monopoly for rendering it exists. |

Source: Gildenhuys and Knipe (2000: 57-59)

This comparison shows the challenges surrounding the nature of services and why certain services best lie with government (Gildenhuys & Knipe, 2000:57-59). Whenever it becomes imperative for government to deliver and to reach some of its goals, or whenever the private sector omits to render them, such services become public services (Gildenhuys & Knipe, 2000:60).

Quasi-collective services refer to public services which have both collective and particular characteristics (Gildenhuys & Knipe 2000:59). Its users are subsidised through tax income, which causes such services to be supplied by public organisations on a subsidised basis to the poor (Gildenhuys & Knipe, 2000:59). Examples of quasi-collective services include education and preventative health services (Gildenhuys & Knipe, 2000:60). For the purposes of this research, emphasis have been placed on essential collective services, e.g. water, sanitation, refuse removal and electricity. The next part of the discussion will focus on this.

2.2.3. Essential Public Services

Some collective/ public-services (like water, health care and education) are considered so fundamental for human survival that it is deemed to constitute a fundamental human right, hence the use of the term essential or basic services (McDonald, 2012). The effective delivery of such basic or essential services is crucial for poverty reduction and the achievement of developmental goals (McDonald, 2012).

It is also necessary to recognise that governments execute their services in order to reach certain objectives and strategies depending on the ideology of a particular government, e.g. ideologically laissez-faire-oriented governments tend to focus on protecting individuals' personal and property rights whilst social welfare-oriented states will, in addition, concentrate on increasing the social welfare of the poor and needy (Gildenhuys & Knipe, 2000:48). Economic welfare states, on the other hand, will focus on the ideology of helping people to

help themselves so that they are independent of government “handouts” and are able to look after their own social welfare (Gildenhuys & Knipe, 2000:48-49). In Empowerdex’s Munidex survey, which is discussed in greater later in this research, service delivery performance in South Africa was measured in terms of housing, water, sanitation, electricity, and waste removal as the elements of service delivery (Hawes & Mohamed, 2009:2), which clearly indicates a more social welfare oriented approach.

The Constitution refers to sustainable services without defining the word ‘services’ (Craythorne, 2003:158). Likewise, the Municipal Systems Act devotes a chapter to municipal services without defining what these services entail (Craythorne, 2003:158). This gives much freedom to practitioners, but that freedom is limited, and the *ultra vires* doctrine still applies to the extent that a service cannot be shown to be constitutionally defensible (Craythorne, 2003:158). The Constitution requires that municipalities provide services in a sustainable manner, and that the municipal administration provides such services impartially, fairly, equitably, and without bias (Craythorne, 2003:159). The Municipal Systems Act also compels municipalities to implement the provisions of the Constitution by giving effect to the basic needs of the community; promoting the development of the local community; and ensuring that all the members of the community have equal access, at least to the minimum level of basic municipal services – such a minimum basic level is also not defined in the Act (Craythorne, 2003:159).

The Municipal Systems Act then continues to state that municipal services must be (Craythorne, 2003:159) equitable and accessible (to all); provided in a manner that is conducive to the prudent, economic, efficient and effective use of available resources and the improvement of standards of quality over time; financially sustainable (financially sustainable goes beyond viability, i.e. what can be afforded now, and extends to what can be afforded in the future); environmentally sustainable (i.e. preserving the environment for future generations); and regularly reviewed with a view to upgrading, extension and improvement.

Considering the above, the constitutional position on services goes beyond a particular activity; a service should actually be considered against the needs of the community with nobody being excluded. The performance of the service should be effective (or doing the right thing) and efficient (or doing it on time and at the minimum cost) (Craythorne, 2003:159). The constitutional position indicates that a broader approach towards the definition of essential or basic services is taken, but there still is no working definition to guide service delivery performance. In this instance, the definition provided by McDonald states a clear guideline as

to prioritisation of key essential services by arguing that basic human rights and the ability to exercise them should guide the process of service prioritisation (McDonald, 2012).

The Empowerdex's Munidex is an example of an institutional or organisational audit, defines five key basic services according to which the municipalities are evaluated, which include housing, water, electricity, sanitation, and waste removal (Hawes & Mohamed, 2009:1). In the City of Tshwane's consultative citizen's report card (CCRC) survey as an example of citizen evaluation based on citizens' perceptions, basic services are defined to include only a selection of the mandated basic services⁸ which comprise housing, water, electricity, sanitation, refuse removal (or waste removal), and transport (Roefs et al. 2006:7). Whether transport is considered so important for human survival that it is deemed to constitute a fundamental human right (McDonald, 2012), or whether it only constitutes a real need for this particular community and all of its members, it cannot be excluded as a public service from a citizen evaluation endeavour for the City of Tshwane.

It is noticeable that what is considered to be a basic service and essential for service delivery in one context is not essential in the next context – an institutional service delivery evaluation may not deem transport essential for public service delivery, whereas transport from the perspective of the community in a citizen evaluation, is deemed as essential and constitutes a basic need in terms of public services and the distribution of such services.

By the same token, what is considered to be essential for public service delivery for one country does not necessarily enjoy the same priority status or importance in another country, for the reason that development priorities differ. In the case example involving the City of Xiamen (in China) and the City of Phoenix (in Arizona, USA), a citizen survey which incorporated attitudes about services was conducted and the selected basic services for this research encompassed culture and recreation; environmental services; public works (including street repair, maintenance and cleaning); public safety and social services (i.e. services for the elderly and homeless, youth programmes, health, and job creation) (Chen et al., 2010:7-8). In this scenario, even priority services such as social services and public safety,

⁸ The City of Tshwane is mandated according to Part B of Schedule 4 and Part B of Schedule 5 of the Constitution (Republic of South Africa, 1996) to also perform basic services including community services; emergency services; security services; public works; and environmental health services (Roefs et al., 2006:5). It is interesting to note that sanitation is not listed as a mandated service for the City of Tshwane (Roefs et al., 2006:5) and is also not mentioned in the strategic focus areas for the City in 2005 (Roefs et al., 2006:5-7), but was nonetheless included in the CCRC survey.

are (by comparison) public service that will only in future rise to the top of the basic services agenda, as more urgent services involving water, electricity and housing continue to dominate the public sector agenda. However, the fact that social services and public safety are basic services for citizens in China and the USA, indicate that these two countries are at a different level of service delivery than SA.

2.2.4. Public Value and Service Delivery

The concept of public value and associated concepts such as public good and the public interest, ought to be investigated in this research. The reasons for this are firstly their relationship to “publicness” and collective services (c.f. 2.2.1 and 2.2.2). A second reason is that public value provides the theoretical basis for this thesis. A discussion on public-services also requires an understanding of the value system that underlies it in shaping public thinking and being. Public value differs from private value in the sense that the focus is not on the individual, but on the collective, as illustrated in Figure 2-7.

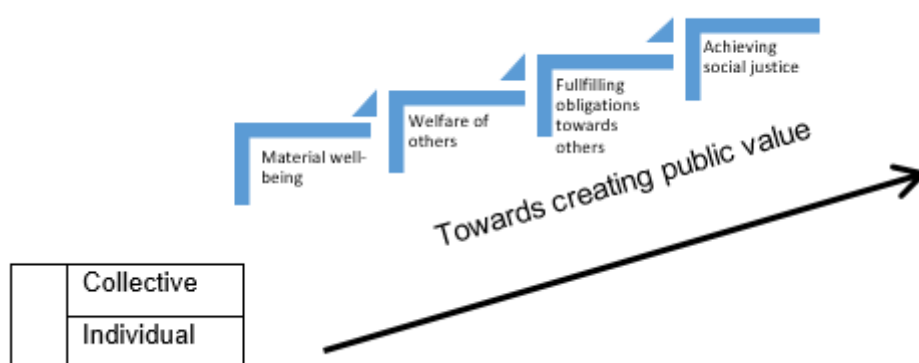


Figure 2-7: Degrees of "publicness" in the concept of public value Source: Moore (2013:60)
Source: Moore (2013:60)

In Figure 2-7 the collective and the individual represent the arbiters of value (Moore, 2013:60). Free societies give special standing to individuals to pursue their own ideas about their wellbeing and that of others by encouraging free markets and the right to elect individuals to represent their interests in government (Moore, 2013:59-60). Although individuals are privileged, a collective must also be formed and be able articulate collective interests, especially where the use and application of (collectively owned) public assets are concerned (Moore, 2013:60). As mentioned before (see discussion under 2.2.1), the term “public” also takes on the meaning of a vital, yet fundamental organising concept (Newman & Clarke, 2009:11).

Moore holds the belief that what is true for the individual could also be true of the collective public (2013:60). Individuals often value their own material wellbeing, but can also value other individuals' purposes and could be quite willing to absorb some personal costs to achieve these purposes (Moore, 2013:60). The collective could therefore be interested in protecting its material interests as well as be concerned about the plight of the less fortunate (Moore, 2013:60-61).

Figure 2-7 shows the stages of moving from private individualistic value and material wellbeing, towards fully fledged collective public value and achieving social justice (Moore, 2013:60). It indicates various values as degrees of "publicness" within the context of public value (Moore, 2013:60). When considering this continuum of values, the distinction between (individual or private) particular services and (public) collective services (as discussed in 2.2.2) stands out. Individual or particular services and the accompanying benefits tend to single out the individual, catering only for individual welfare by apportioning benefits and excluding others from obtaining those services and benefits by charging a price per unit (Gildenhuys & Knipe, 2000:57-59). The other differences relate to the nature of public products (e.g. water, electricity, sanitation, refuse removal) that have to be collectively funded by taxation and are not easily divisible.

Public initiatives striving towards achieving public value could be enhanced by the introduction of a vision that is based on the strategic triangle, as illustrated in . The strategic triangle serves as a framework for aligning three inter-dependent processes deemed necessary for the creation of public value (Bennington & Moore, 2011:4). In other words, the strategic triangle represents three "tests" that strategies aimed at creating public value must satisfy (Bennington & Moore, 2011:4). These "tests" relate to three areas, namely (a) the creation of public value outcomes; (b) the mobilising of sufficient authorisation; support and being politically stable; and (c) being operationally and administratively feasible (Bennington & Moore, 2011:5).

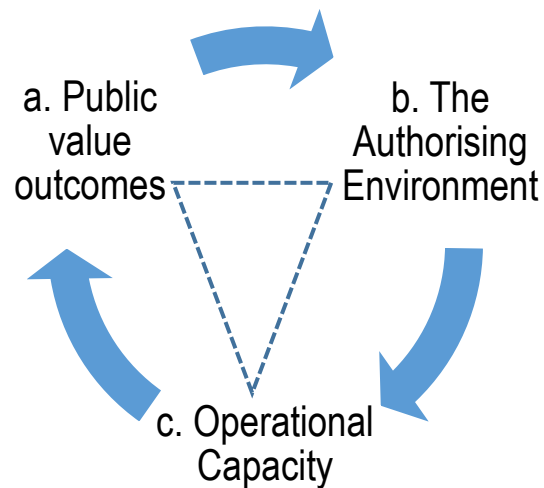


Diagram 2-2: The strategic triangle of public value

Source: Bennington and Moore (2011:5)

The first process involved in creating public value refers to defining what public value means within a given context (Bennington & Moore, 2011:4). This includes the clarification of strategic goals and specific public value outcomes (Bennington & Moore, 2011:4). The second process refers to the creation of an authorising environment, which is required for the achievement of desired public value outcomes and includes constructing and sustaining a coalition of stakeholders from the public, private and third sectors (Bennington & Moore, 2011:4). The third process, namely building operational capacity, includes harnessing and mobilising operational resources which are necessary to achieve the desired public value outcomes (Bennington & Moore, 2011:4). Diagram 2-3 illustrates the NDP, as mentioned previously, in terms of public value and the three “tests” for creating public value.

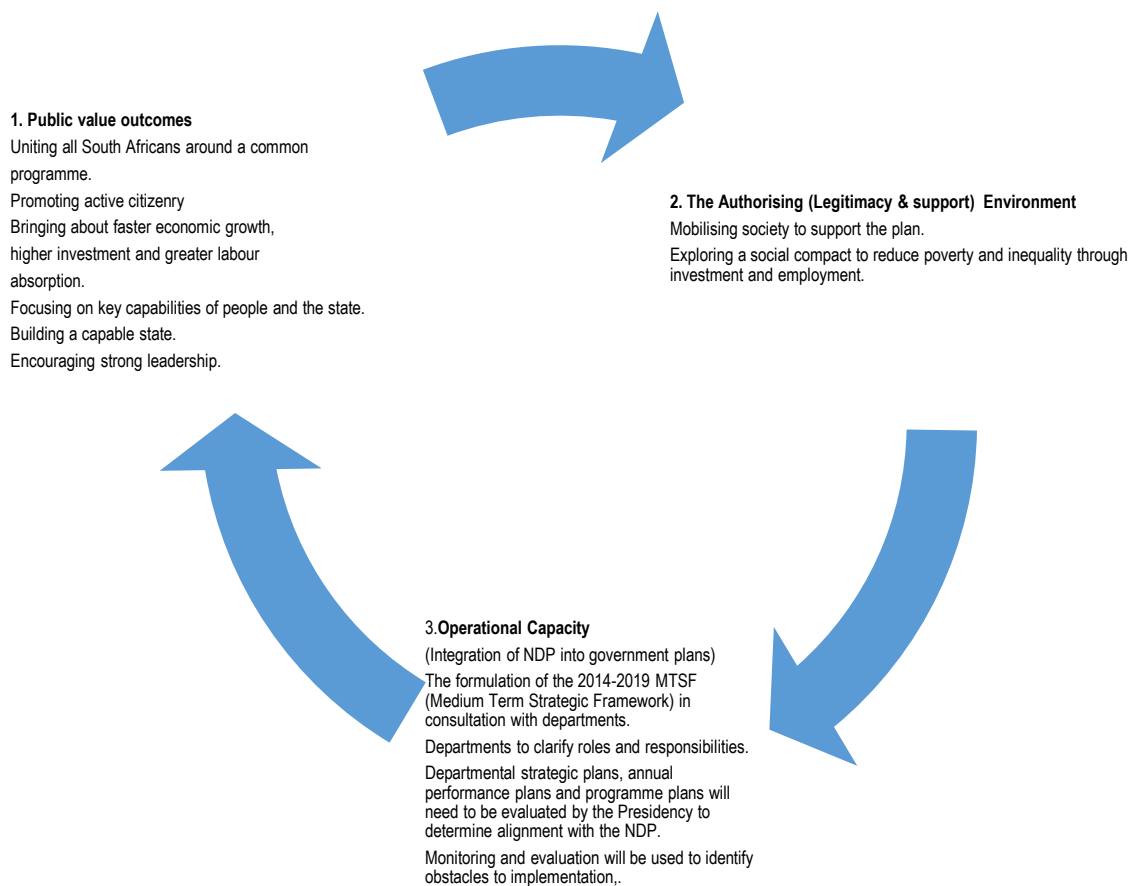


Diagram 2-3: The strategic triangle of public value: NDP priority areas and National Planning Commission focus areas

Sources: Bennington and Moore (2011:5); Department: The Presidency of the Republic of South Africa, (2011:16) and South African Government News Agency (2013)

In terms of its stated public value outcomes, the NDP proposes that all South Africans should be focusing their efforts under a common programme to bring about much needed national reforms such as faster economic growth; higher investment; and greater labour absorption (Department: The Presidency of the Republic of South Africa, 2011:16). The emphasis is largely on activating citizens and democracy through strong leadership and the development of the key capabilities of people as well as the state (Department: The Presidency of the Republic of South Africa, 2011:16).

As for creating an authorising environment to generate legitimacy and support, the NDP undertakes to mobilise society to support the plan and explore the possibilities of creating a social contract to reduce poverty and inequality (Department: The Presidency of the Republic

of South Africa, 2011:16). This will be achieved through investment and employment (Department: The Presidency of the Republic of South Africa, 2011:16).

In terms of creating sufficient operational capacity, the integration of the NDP into existing government plans is a key priority. NDP proposals have to be incorporated into existing activities of departments and broken down into the medium and short-term plans of government at national, provincial and municipal levels (South African Government News Agency, 2013). To facilitate this integration, the Presidency is leading the formulation of the 2014-2019 Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) in consultation with departments (South African Government News Agency, 2013). The Presidency and National Treasury intend to cooperate with departments in order to (a) clarify roles and responsibilities; (b) ensure that plans and budgets are aligned; and (c) develop clear performance indicators for each programme (South African Government News Agency, 2013). Departmental strategic plans, annual performance plans and programme plans will need to be evaluated by the Presidency to determine alignment with the NDP prior to submission to Parliament (South African Government News Agency, 2013).

Operational capacity can be depicted as an open system (or value chain) in which inputs are converted (through the organisational production process consisting of activities and processes such as policies, programmes, and procedures) into social outcomes (Moore, 2013:120). Partners and co-producers collaborate with Government to realise these social outcomes (Bennington & Moore, 2011:47), as illustrated in Diagram 2-4.

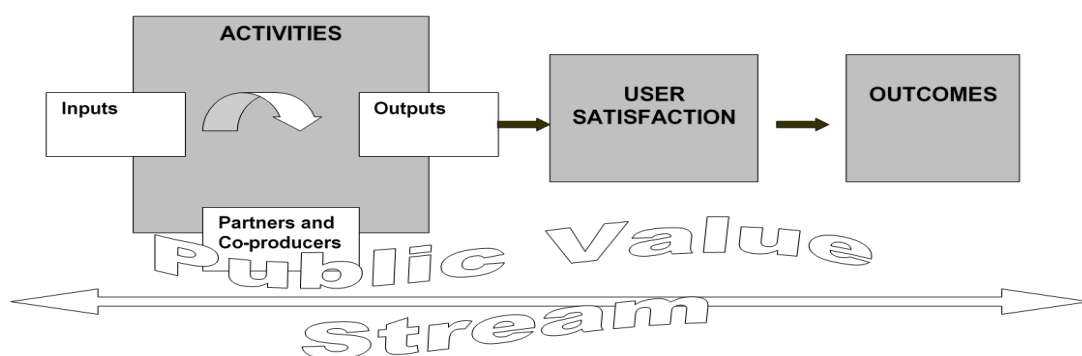


Diagram 2-4: The public value stream

Source: Bennington and Moore (2011:48)

Public value by nature highlights the importance of processes and outcomes as opposed to inputs and outputs (Bennington & Moore, 2011:47). Analysis of the public value stream as illustrated above can be applied to explain the public value outcomes for specific groups of

citizens or services (Bennington & Moore, 2011:47). In light of this statement, the public's service perceptions serve as inputs in the public value stream, informing and moulding (as discussed before) public policies, programmes, procedures, and other activities (Moore, 2013:120). When perceptions are omitted from the value stream or inadequately processed as inputs, the outputs will be tainted. This, in turn, may galvanise feelings of disillusionment and service dissatisfaction on the part of citizens and local communities, informing the scenario where social outcomes of services not meeting the set development objectives (Bennington & Moore, 2011:48).

When participation processes have failed to incorporate citizens' perceptions as inputs to the public value-streamed process, the result will inevitably be that of citizens staging demonstrations and protests as discussed in 1.1 of this document. In this scenario, "negative" public value was created by an insufficient or incomplete citizen engagement process, in which citizens' perceptions were diluted or were neglected from the process. Citizen expectations of services, presented in their service perceptions, ended up not forming part of vital public organisational production processes (i.e. service delivery) as well as the public service value system (Moore, 2013:120). This raises the issue of restoring citizen perception and including it in the public value system for citizen engagement to be worthwhile. This inquiry is addressed in more detail in Chapter 3 of this research, when the reality of citizen perceptions in the SA public value system will be investigated.

As mentioned earlier, the theory of public value provides the theoretical basis for this thesis. Bennington and Moore (2011: 34) explained the epistemological position of public value theory. The authors argued that the theory of public value forms part of public administration and the emerging or contemporary paradigm, which in turn forms part of networked community governance (Bennington & Moore, 2011:34). Networked community governance responds to growing calls by communities for improved connection between Government and citizens, as well as greater integration and cooperation between Government and citizens (Brown & Keast, 2003: 107-131).

As mentioned before, attention will be paid to the critical service and quality aspects which are the same for both the public and the private sectors. In the previous section attention was given to the differences in public and private services. This difference calls for a difference in benchmarking for the public and private sectors. In order to generate good or valid benchmarks, similar organisations must be compared – apples cannot be compared with oranges (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:18). For this reason, the Batho Pele principles which focus on guidelines specifically for the public sector are also investigated in the next part of the

discussion. However, all services are by nature difficult to evaluate (as discussed previously), because services do not always render tangible offerings but rather consist of a range of intangible product offerings – a series of deeds, processes and performances. Because all services are similar with regard to their “intangibility”, evaluating service quality calls for a specific approach, an approach that provides more than what organisational and financial audits are able to put on the table, which is investigated in the following part of the discussion.

2.3. SERVICE QUALITY ASSESSMENT

Generating and then applying community views or perceptions on the service performance of Government may lead to the adherence to higher quality standards in terms of service delivery (Civicus & PG Exchange, 2012:1). The purpose of this part of the discussion is to explore the assessment relating to the quality of public services. Attention is also given to the inclusion of perceptions in service quality assessment. The next part of the discussion involves a discussion on the nature of quality, which forms the basis of service quality assessment.

Quality determines whether satisfaction with the service will occur, with satisfaction being considered a relatively temporary post transaction state reflecting whether a service has fulfilled its purpose (Arnould, Price & Zinkhan, 2004:758). Six perspectives on quality prevail. The first is the transcendent view, which is synonymous with innate excellence: a mark of uncompromising standards and high achievement (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:419). The second perspective entails the product-based approach which is completely objective and sees quality as a precise and measurable variable without accounting for variances such as the personal preferences of the user (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:419). The third approach, namely the user-based approach, equates quality with maximum satisfaction, and is subjective as well as demand-orientated (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:419).

The fourth approach, the manufacturing-based approach, is supply-based and is primarily concerned with engineering and manufacturing practices (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:419). Fifthly, the value-based definition, or “affordable excellence”, sees quality in terms of value and price. Lastly, the service-based approach argues that the specific nature of services requires a distinctive approach to measuring service quality (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:419).

Perceived service quality is the result of an evaluation process during which users compare their perceptions of service delivery and its outcomes with what they expect (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:420). The SERVQUAL scale and its dimensions which will be discussed at a later stage were developed on the premises of this service-based approach to quality (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:420). The value of the service-based approach lies in the fact that it stresses the importance of the service nature which determines the course of quality measurement. The ability to evaluate services according to their nature was critical to this research, as the research addressed public services in particular, which are quite distinct from private services.

In the light of the above-mentioned perspectives of quality, various service quality assessment models will be examined. The aim is to determine a suitable assessment model for diagnosing service quality issues in the public domain. The **technical and functional quality model** explores how technical and functional quality influence a service, and how the customer perceives these dimensions (Seth, Deshmukh & Vrat, 2005: 935-938). This model is in line with the service-based approach which equates quality with maximum satisfaction (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:419). The technical and functional model is similar to the customer gap (see subsection 2.3.1) which forms part of the synthesised model and focuses on expectations and perceptions (Zeithaml et al., 2009:32). However, the customer gap is but one of six quality related gaps (see 2.3.1) and the technical and functional model is limited in its scope.

Another model of quality assessment, i.e. the **synthesised model (or Gaps model) of service quality**, enquires into what factors contribute to the information and feedback, design, implementation and communication gaps (Seth et al, 2005: 935-938). It also highlights how service managers can minimize the service quality gaps (or short falls) through the performance of planning, implementation and control tasks (Seth et al, 2005: 935-938). This model adheres to the service based approach where quality assessment is focused around the nature of the service type (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:419). It provides a holistic approach to quality assessment and takes the service type (i.e. collective or specific services) into consideration.

The **performance only model** focuses on the role of value in determining what constitutes a service. It attempts to establish the way in which value affects the purchase decision (Seth et al, 2005: 935-938). This model adheres to the value-based definition where quality is perceived in terms of value and price (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:419). The **ideal value model** explores the cognitive process by which consumer service concepts are formed and changed (Seth et al., 2005 935-938). The ideal value model is demand driven which is what the user-based approach promotes. According to the user based approach, quality is synonymous with maximum satisfaction (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:419).

The **evaluated performance and standardised quality model** is focussed on ways in which to generalize the model results for all types of service settings, and whether change in the type of service needs re-examination of the model (Seth et al., 2005: 922, 935-938). This model falls within the ambit of the product based approach where neither the users' needs nor the nature of the service are taken into account (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:419), and does not provide for the unique challenges and the nature of public or collective services.

The **information technology alignment model** establishes how information technology can enhance customer satisfaction. The model also enquires into whether the investment in information technology depends on competition, market growth and other similar factors. (Seth et al., 2005: 935-938). This model focusses on the supply side and is similar to the manufacturing-based approach (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:419). The information technology alignment model is useful in assessing public services but tend to focus on one aspect (i.e. technology and innovation) of service quality only. As seen in the synthesised model of service quality, there are many factors that influences quality such as service design, implementation and communication (Seth et al, 2005: 935-938). This model is too simplistic for the challenges posed by public services.

The **attribute and overall affect model** is aimed at determining the effect of attitude and behaviour towards using a technology, on service quality expectations (Seth et al., 2005: 935-938). This model is a combination of two models, both relating to the use of expectations and how it is affected by the use of technology (Seth et al., 2005:924). The attribute model pertains to self-service options and what users would expect from that (Seth et al., 2005:924). The overall affect model pertains to users' feelings towards the use of self-service, and is based on an affective approach to decision making where consumers would use overall predispositions to form expectations (Seth et al., 2005:924). This model focusses on the supply side, and relates to the manufacturing-based approach (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:419). As with the information technology alignment model, the attribute and overall affect model tends to focus on one aspect (i.e. technology and innovation) of service quality to the detriment of other aspects which are crucial to service quality assessment.

The **model of perceived quality and satisfaction** determines the balance between positive and negative effect of expectations (Seth et al., 2005: 935-938). The model explores the effect of expectations and desired service outcomes on satisfaction. This is measured through a set of ten attributes which includes (a) convenience in making an appointment, (b) friendliness of the staff, (c) whether the service advisor listened to questions, (d) whether such service advisor provided accurate information, (e) how knowledgeable the service advisor was, (f) whether the advice was consistent, (g) whether the service advisor helped in long-term planning, (h) whether such advisor helped in choosing the right courses for one's career, (i) whether the advisor was interested in one's personal life, and (j) if the offices were professional. Not all of the attributes are appropriate for public or collective services. The synthesised model of service quality also prescribes service attributes which are referred to as criteria for service quality assessment (see subsection 2.3.3) which are more applicable to the public domain and collective services. The model of perceived quality and satisfaction is

subjective and demand-oriented (which is typical of the user-based approach) (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:419). The focus is specifically on user expectations which could be used to address the research questions at hand. However, the model loses sight of other key quality assessment aspects such service design, service implementation and communication (as seen in the synthesized model of service quality) (Seth et al., 2005: 935-938).

The **pivotal, core and peripheral attribute model** enquires into the weighting of these three levels of attributes, i.e. pivotal, core and peripheral (Seth et al., 2005: 935-938). The pivotal attribute refers to the output or end product of service encounters, whilst the core attribute refers to the people, process and organisational structure with which a customer should interact and negotiate during service encounters (Seth et al., 2005: 926). The peripheral attribute refers to incidental additions which perfects the service (Seth et al., 2005: 926). The model enquires into which of these attributes determines quality, and whether the determinate attribute changes with the type of service settings (Seth et al., 2005: 925, 935-938). The model is based on a combination of perspectives, i.e. (a) transcendent which strives towards excellence (peripheral), (b) product-based which is objective and does not take variances such as personal preference into consideration (pivotal), and (c) user-based which is demand orientated (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:419). For the purposes of this research, only the core attribute and user-based is necessary to explore citizen perceptions.

The **retail service quality and perceived value model** determines the impact of functional value, emotional value and social value on the quality of the product, its service quality, the perceived price of the product, the value for money related to the product and the willingness to buy the product (Seth et al., 2005: 935-938). The model adheres to the value-based approach where quality is seen in terms of value and price (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:419). The retail and service quality value model is problematic for public or collective services because of the unique value system of the public domain, i.e. public value (see the discussion in 2.2.4). The definition of value is different for the public and private sectors. Public value strives towards different goals than private sector value, and public value is not always measurable in monetary terms, as is the case with value in the private sector.

The **service quality, customer value and customer satisfaction model** is aimed at determining the measurement issues associated with perceived value and customer satisfaction (Seth et al., 2005: 935-938). The model enquires into whether the determinants of perceived value and customer satisfaction change with type of service setting (Seth et al., 2005: 935-938). The service quality, customer value and customer satisfaction model is also related to the value-based approach (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:419). Unlike the retail service

quality and perceived value model, it takes into consideration that value may differ according to service types and service settings. This model also takes a narrow approach to quality assessment and value is not the only determinate for satisfaction (Zeithaml et al., 2009:44).

The **antecedents and mediator model** questions the role of actual behaviour and actual repurchase on predictive power of service quality and customer satisfaction evaluation. The model attempts to determine what are the antecedents of customer satisfaction, whether these are correlated with antecedents of service quality (Seth et al., 2005: 935-938). The antecedents and mediator model follow the user-based approach (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:419). It is not suitable for public or collective services because of the monopolistic nature of such services which limits repurchasing to the same provider (see 2.2.2) (Gildenhuis & Knipe, 2000:57-59).

The Gaps model of service quality (or synthesised model, as discussed earlier in this section) provides a useful means for assessing the service performance and capabilities of an organisation, as well as the organisational service strategy (Zeithaml et al., 2009:44) and will be addressed in the next part of the discussion. The Gaps model will form the basis of the diagnostic tool which will be utilised to assess public service quality shortfalls. The diagnostic tool will be developed at a later stage in this research, along with the service improvement strategy and plan which are aimed at incorporating perceptions in public service value systems.

2.3.1. Gaps Model of Service Quality

The Gaps model has been applied as a service quality diagnostic instrument and it offers a way for organisations to examine all the factors that influence service quality (Zeithaml et al., 2009:44). Zeithaml et al. (2009: 31-42) discussed four potential service quality gaps pertaining to the areas of listening, service design, service delivery, and communication within the service environment that may lead to a fifth and most detrimental gap, i.e. the customer gap. Lovelock and Wirtz (2011:406, 408) extended this model to include a sixth gap, i.e. perception gap.

The next part of the discussion will be devoted to these provider gaps.

2.3.1.1. The customer gap

The customer or service quality gap focuses on the difference between customer expectations and perceptions (Zeithaml et al., 2009:32), or perceived service. Customer, or user (as in the

instance of the public sector), expectations are reference points that are brought into the service experience (Zeithaml et al., 2009:32). User perceptions are subjective assessments of actual service experiences and often consist of what a customer believes should or will happen (Zeithaml et al., 2009:32). Closing the gap between expectations and perceptions is critical to delivering quality service and a positive service experience (Zeithaml et al., 2009:32) in both the private and the public sectors.

The next gap that will be discussed relates to listening, which is key to the public sector as it relates to consultation to obtain an understanding of citizens' service expectations.

2.3.1.2. The listening gap

The listening gap is the difference between customers' expectations of a service and the delivering agency's understanding (whether it is government or an outsourced party delivering the service) of those expectations (Zeithaml et al., 2009:34), and is primarily caused by a lack of accurate awareness and appreciation of the service expectations involved (Zeithaml et al., 2009:34). Diagram 2-5 illustrates the listening gap and the factors that create this shortfall.

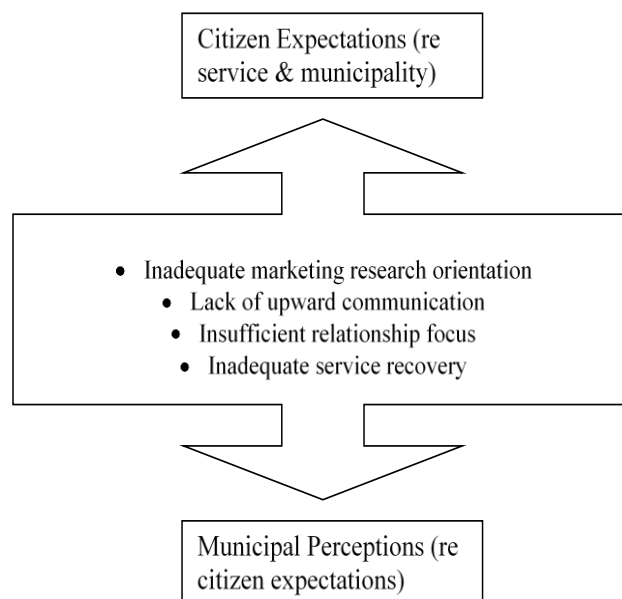


Diagram 2-5: The listening gap

Source: Zeithaml et al., (2009:34)

Critical factors contributing to the listening gap include (a) inadequate services research orientation, when management does not acquire accurate information about customers' expectations (Zeithaml et al., 2009:34); (b) the lack of upward communication, where

management does not draw on the experience and knowledge possessed by frontline employees, and fails to understand what such employees know (Zeithaml et al., 2009:34); (c) insufficient relationship focus, when organisations do not focus sufficiently on maintaining and strengthening customer relationships (Zeithaml et al., 2009:36); and (d) inadequate service recovery, where organisations follow up on and deal effectively with customer complaints (Zeithaml et al., 2009:36).

Table 2-4 indicates the local application of the factors contributing to gaps via the Batho Pele principles. The principles, as measures to assess quality, are linked to the gap to ascertain which quality measures should be present and upheld to avoid the particular gap from occurring (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:53). This constitutes the first step to bridging this gap.

Table 2-4: The listening gap in relation to the Batho Pele principles and its application in the municipal context

| Provider Gap 1: The Listening Gap | Batho Pele principles | Application: Local |
|---|-----------------------|---|
| Inadequate marketing research orientation | Consultation | Consult with communities on basic services. *. |
| Lack of upward communication | Consultation | Consult with communities on basic services. |
| Insufficient relationship focusses | N/A | |
| Inadequate service recovery | Redress | Responding to complaints regarding service delivery. Following up on service delivery complaints Providing solutions for problems and complaints. |

Source: Adapted from Zeithaml et al. (2009:34) and Roberts and Hemson (2008:54)

Consultation is key to addressing this gap's contributing factors – consulting citizens and communities avoids the creation of inadequate marketing research (e.g. inappropriate or unnecessary survey initiatives); and the lack of upward communication (Zeithaml et al., 2009:34; 144-145; 165-166). As far as relationship building is concerned, citizens as clients of government have very few (if any) alternatives to public services and the application of loyalty seems unreasonable due to the monopolistic nature of public services (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:18-19). The public sector is unable to reward citizens for continued patronage as it is based on the principles of equity and due process which prohibits it from treating citizens inequitably by providing different levels of the same service (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:18-19). Relationship building is therefore inappropriate in the public domain.

The next gap relates to service design and standards. This is particularly relevant to the public sector because one of the service quality principles contained in the Batho Pele, requires the establishment of service standards that are realistic, relevant and precise (Republic of South Africa, 1997). The service design and standards gap pertain to the mismatch between customer expectations and the service provider's designs and standards, which should reflect customers' perceptions (Zeithaml et al., 2009:36).

2.3.1.3. The service design and standards gap

This gap occurs when those responsible for setting service standards, for some reason or another do not include customers' expectations in this process (Zeithaml et al., 2009:37). Diagram 2-6 illustrates the service design and standards gap and explains the factors responsible for creating this service quality shortfall.

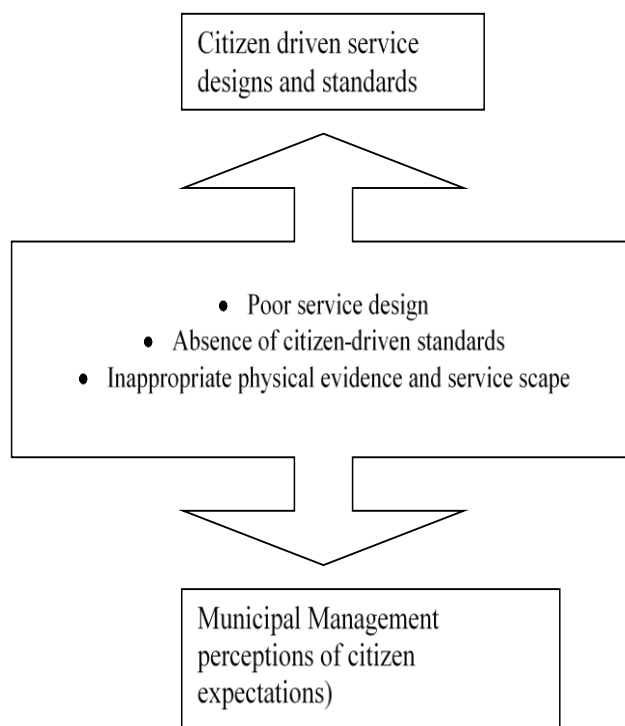


Diagram 2-6: The service design gap

Source: Zeithaml et al. (2009:37)

Poor service design is one of the factors that are present with this gap and it includes an unsystematic new service development process; vague undefined designs for services; and an inability to connect service design to service positioning (Zeithaml et al., 2009:37). Another contributing factor to this gap is the absence of customer-driven standards, which is indicative

of a lack in process management focus on the customer's specific needs and an absence of a formal process determining service quality objectives (Zeithaml et al., 2009:37). A third important factor which leads to this gap is inappropriate physical evidence and service scape which includes a service scape design which does not match customer and employee needs, or failure of the service organisation to update and maintain the current service scape (Zeithaml et al., 2009:37). Service scape problems are also created when service organisations fail to develop physical evidence of service delivery in line with their customers' expectations (Zeithaml et al., 2009:37).

Table 2-5 indicates the local application of factors contributing to the gap via the Batho Pele principles.

Table 2-5: The service design gap in relation to the Batho Pele principles and its application to the municipal context

| Provider Gap 2: The Service Design Gap | Batho Pele principles | Application: Local |
|---|---------------------------|--|
| Poor service design | Setting service standards | Citizens should be informed of the level and quality of services which they will receive in order for them to know what to expect. |
| | Providing information | Municipality provides people with good information regarding basic services. |
| Absence of citizen-driven standards | Consultation | Municipalities consult communities enough on basic services. |
| | Openness & Transparency | The municipality provides regular feedback about its performance. |
| Inappropriate physical evidence and service scape | Consultation | Municipalities consult communities enough on basic services. |
| | Value for money | Public services should be provided effectively and efficiently in order to give citizens the best possible value for money. |

Source: Adapted from Zeithaml et al. (2009:37); Roberts and Hemson (2008: 54); and the Republic of South Africa (1997)

When examining Table 2-5, it is evident that consultation is important in the public sector to avoid both the absence of citizen-driven standards and physical scape problems (Zeithaml et al., 2009:37). In terms of poor service design, setting service standards and informing citizens as well as providing good information about what to expect and what they can insist upon is

key (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54) and will create an environment where managers responsible for standards and design are necessitated to involve citizens about these matters (Zeithaml et al., 2009:37).

Clear internal communication amongst staff is also required for everyone to be working with the same concepts of the new service (Zeithaml et al., 2009:37). Openness and transparency is another significant quality measurement within the context of this gap as it requires of managers to always keep citizens informed about service delivery performance and standards (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54); (Republic of South Africa, 1997).

Value for money is important when dealing with physical evidence and service scape because government institutions are compelled to optimise access to their services within the context of fiscal constraints and the fulfilment of competing needs (Republic of South Africa, 1997), meaning that physical evidence of service delivery should be limited to what is functionally necessary to provide an essential service, e.g. space and function, layout, equipment, and furnishings (Zeithaml et al., 2009:325). The objectives of service delivery should always be welfare, equity and efficiency (Republic of South Africa, 1997).

The service performance gap will be examined in the next part of the discussion. This gap's focus employee issues and on deficiencies in human resource policies is particularly relevant to service quality, as Government is striving to improve its employees' skills levels and attract new skills (Department: The Presidency of the Republic of South Africa, National Planning Commission, 2011:45).

2.3.1.4. The service performance gap

This gap signifies the discrepancy between development of customer-driven service standards and the actual service performance by employees (Zeithaml et al., 2009: 38). Even in the presence of guidelines for excellent service performance and delivery; high-quality service performance is not a certainty (Zeithaml et al., 2009: 38). Diagram 2-7 represents the service performance gap.

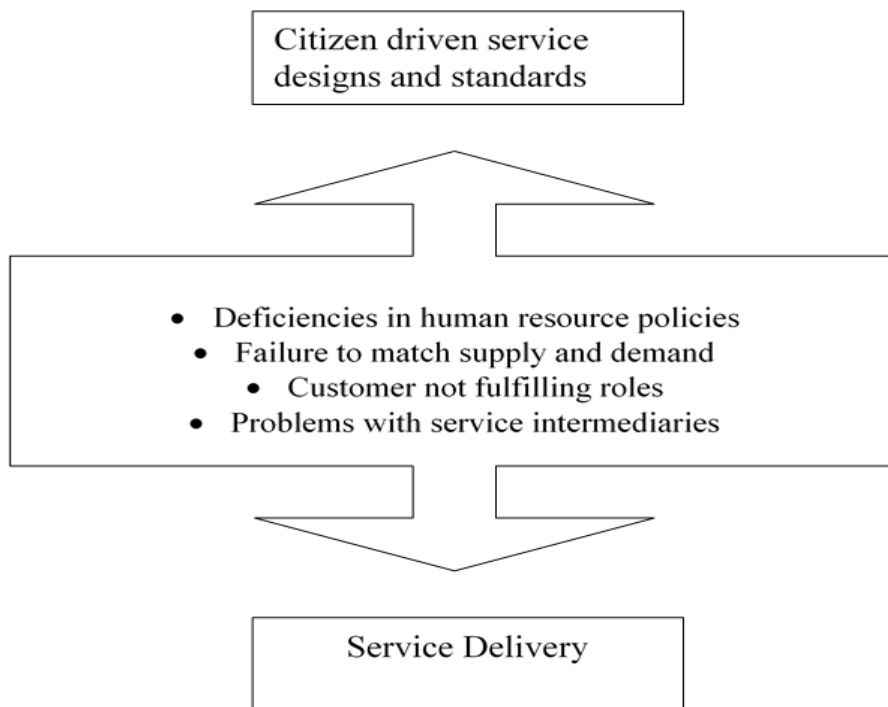


Diagram 2-7: The service performance gap

Source: Zeithaml et al. (2009:39)

The contributing factors to this service provider gap relate to deficiencies in HR policies which include ineffective recruitment; unclear role definition and conflicting roles within the service organization; poor matching of employee-technology in jobs; inappropriate compensation and evaluation systems; and a lack of teamwork and empowerment amongst employees (Zeithaml et al., 2009:39). The failure to match supply and demand is inappropriate for public services as it is not profit driven (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:18-19). Customers lack knowledge of their roles and responsibilities resulting into them having a negative impact on each other (Zeithaml et al., 2009:39). This contributes to customers not fulfilling their roles and contributing to this gap area (Zeithaml et al., 2009:39). Another contributing factor relates to problems with service intermediaries (Zeithaml et al., 2009:39), e.g. alternative providers of public services and service partners (Gildenhuys & Knipe, 2000:65-67) as discussed in 2.2.1 of this research. It is difficult to control the quality and consistency of services, as well as tension between empowerment and control (Zeithaml et al., 2009:39).

Table 2-6 indicates the local application of the gap contributing factors through the Batho Pele principles.

Table 2-6: The service performance gap in relation to the Batho Pele principles and its application in the municipal context

| Provider Gap 3: The Service Performance Gap | Batho Pele principles | Local Application |
|--|---------------------------|--|
| Deficiencies in human resource policies: employee inhibitors | N/A | |
| Customer not fulfilling roles: customer or citizen inhibitors. | Providing information | Municipality provides people with good information regarding basic services. |
| Failure to match capacity & demand | N/A | |
| Problems with service intermediaries. | Setting service standards | Citizens should be informed of the level and quality of services which they will receive in order for them to know what to expect. |

Source: Adapted from Zeithaml et al. (2009:39); Roberts and Hemson (2008: 54); and Republic of South Africa (1997)

When linking the Batho Pele principles to the gap to prevent it from occurring (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:53; Republic of South Africa, 1997), setting service standards such as difficulty controlling the quality and consistency of services and tension between empowerment and control enables service organisations to address problems with service intermediaries (Zeithaml et al., 2009:39). Not only should these standards be communicated to citizens as customers of public sector organisations (Republic of South Africa, 1997), but service intermediaries should also be informed and their buy-in should be obtained to ensure their commitment to these standards. Providing people with good information regarding basic services (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54) is key to educating customers to fulfil their roles and avoid service quality being jeopardised (Zeithaml et al., 2009:38).

The next part of the discussion will focus on the communication gap, which relates to service related promises. This gap is important as it relates to empty and false promises regarding public services that was made by Government (Business day, 2009a).

2.3.1.5. The communication gap

The communication gap signifies the discrepancy between actual service delivery and the customer's perception of what he or she received (Zeithaml et al., 2009:42). A significant factor

influencing this gap is the service related promises that are communicated by the service provider (Zeithaml et al., 2009: 42). Over time this discrepancy between actual and promised service can widen the customer gap if service related promises are not factually correct (Zeithaml et al., 2009: 42). Diagram 2-8 illustrates the communication gap and the factors which need to be addressed to close this gap.



Diagram 2-8: The communication gap

Source: Zeithaml et al. (2009:42)

One of the most important contributing factors to this gap is the lack of an integrated services marketing approach to communication with both the customer, to prevent over-promising in terms of the service, and the internal staff, to ensure greater understanding of the reality of service delivery and what the service entails (Zeithaml et al., 2009:42-43). The tendency to not coordinate external communications and the absence of a solid marketing programme also exaggerates this gap (Zeithaml et al., 2009:42). Ineffective management of customer

expectations also contributes to widening this gap; this includes inadequate education of customers regarding the service and inaccurate as well as uncoordinated service communication to the customer (Zeithaml et al., 2009:42). Internal communication regarding services plays as important a role in addressing this gap – insufficient horizontal communication amongst service staff and incongruent internal policies and procedures may lead to miscommunication regarding services (Zeithaml et al., 2009:42).

Table 2-7 indicates the local application of the factors contributing to the communication gap.

Table 2-7 : The communication gap in relation to the Batho Pele principles and its application in the municipal context

| Provider Gap 4: The Communication Gap | Batho Pele principles | Local Application |
|---|--------------------------|--|
| Lack of integrated services marketing | Consultation | Municipalities consult communities adequately for services. |
| | Providing information | Municipality provides people with good information about basic services. |
| Ineffective management of customer expectations | Consultation | Municipalities consult communities adequately for services. |
| | Providing information | Municipality provides people with good information about basic services. |
| Over promising | Consultation | Municipalities consult communities adequately for services. |
| | Providing information | Municipality provides people with good information about basic services. |
| Inadequate horizontal communication | Consultation | Municipalities consult communities adequately for services. |
| | Providing information | Municipality provides people with good information about basic services. |
| Inappropriate pricing | N/A | |

Source: Adapted from Roberts & Hemson (2008:54) and Zeithaml et al. (2009: 42-43)

According to the analysis in Table 2-7, providing good information (internally and externally) about services and consulting with citizens provide the key solutions to addressing the various aspects of the contributing factors to the communication gap (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54; Zeithaml et al., 2009:42) and will ensure that all the role players understand the service itself and its context and close opportunities for over promising (Zeithaml et al., 2009: 42).

A discussion of the perception gap will follow next. The perception gap signifies the difference between what customers perceive that they obtained during the service encounter, and that which they have in fact received (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:408).

2.3.1.6. The perception gap

This gap originates from customers' inability to correctly evaluate the services which they receive (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:408). The Batho Pele principle which relates to this gap is the provision of information and providing citizens with good information about services to avoid the situation in which citizens inaccurately evaluate service quality because of inadequate information about the service (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:408).

As mentioned previously, the intangible nature of services presents a challenge in terms of performance evaluation. Unlike goods that are tangible and can be evaluated on the basis of product itself and its distribution, services constitute intangible offerings and should also take the service experience of the user into account to obtain a holistic picture in terms of performance evaluation. Government is faced with this same challenge. Although it operates in the public domain and is responsible for rendering basic municipal services, Government remains a service "industry" and its core "product" is a range of public services (Zeithaml et al., 2009:4).

The next part of the discussion will present an analysis of the classification frameworks that will assist government in the challenge of assessing the quality of public services.

2.3.2. Classification framework for service assessment

Measures of service quality can be grouped into broad categories of "hard" and "soft" performance measures (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:426). Soft service quality performance measures cannot be observed just by looking at documentation and records and must be obtained through talking to users, employees and stakeholders. Soft measures provide direction, guidance, and feedback on ways to achieve satisfaction and can be quantified by measuring users' perceptions (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:426). The SERVQUAL survey research instrument is an example of a soft measure (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007: 426) and is discussed shortly. Hard service assessment measures, on the other hand, consist of activities and characteristics that can be counted, timed, or measured through audits (Lovelock & Wirtz,

2007:426). Examples of hard measures include documentation on how many electricity connections or flush toilets were installed over a given period of time.

In order to promote excellent service delivery, organisations (private and public) should make use of both hard and soft measures (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:426). In that way an extensive view on service quality is obtained because the organisation will listen to both its users and its contact employees (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:427).

The next part of the discussion aims to explore the assessment criteria that can be employed to pass a value judgment.

2.3.3. Criteria for Service Quality Assessment

The authors Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman identified 10 criteria used by consumers in assessing service quality (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:420-421). The purpose of this analyses is to develop service quality measures that are suitable for application in the public sector.

The generic criteria are summarised in Table 2-8.

Table 2-8: The service quality assessment criteria and application in the public sector

| Quality Dimensions | Definition | Application of dimensions: Examples of citizens' (collective services related) questions |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| Credibility | Trustworthiness or honesty of the service provider. | Do Government organisations have a credible reputation? |
| Security | Freedom from danger, risk, or doubt. | Is it safe to make my services payments at the Government facility? |
| Access | Approachability and ease of contact. | Is Government making progress in giving all citizens equal access to services? |
| Communication | Listening to consumers and keeping them informed in a language they can understand. | Does Government consult with citizens on basic services? Does Government provide people with good information regarding basic services? |
| Understanding the customer | Making the effort to know consumers and their needs. | When my water bill is incorrect and I dispute it, will my track record of previous payments be considered? Will Government lodge an investigation or will it simply disconnect my water supply? |
| Tangibles | Appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication. | Is my services bill easy to understand? |
| Reliability | Ability to perform the promised service | Do Government organisations follow up on my query as agreed? |
| Responsiveness | Willingness to help customers and perform prompt service. | Do Government organisations respond rapidly to complaints about services? |
| Competence | Possession of the skills and knowledge required to perform the service. | Can the administrative clerk process my service related transaction without fumbling around? |
| Courtesy | Politeness, respect, consideration, and friendliness of contact personnel. | Do Government organisations treat citizens with respect? Are the telephone operators consistently polite when answering my calls? |

Source: Adapted from Lovelock and Wirtz (2007:421)

During subsequent research these quality criteria or dimensions were found to overlap in many respects, and therefore the following five key criteria/ dimensions were compiled. These include tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:420).

For the purposes of this research, it was deemed more suitable to keep to the original ten dimensions as summarised in Table 2.8 to compare the quality dimensions with the Batho Pele principles which were applied to assess public service quality (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:53). The application of the dimensions was performed by changing the dimensions into questions for the public sector (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007: 421).

The next part of the discussion will focus on services research options to ascertain service quality by obtaining services feedback. The options are significant when designing a services improvement program.

2.3.4. Assessing Service Quality: services research options

Service research is used when assessing and investigating the quality of services and organisations often embark on these research programmes (Zeithaml et al., 2009:144-145). Several research options including SERVQUAL, a multidimensional scale aimed at capturing user perceptions and expectations regarding service quality, are available to service organisations (Zeithaml et al., 2009:152). The scale, which was initially published in 1988, currently consists of 21 perception items that are distributed amongst the five service quality dimensions, i.e. tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy mentioned above (Zeithaml et al., 2009:152). This scale has undergone several changes and revisions (Zeithaml et al., 2009:152).

Several items within each of the five dimensions are measured for a total of 21 points on a seven-point scale which varies from strongly agree to strongly disagree (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:422). On the dimension of empathy, the “tangibles” which need to be measured by the user include excellent service providers; modern-looking equipment; visually appealing physical facilities; neat and well-groomed employees at the service provider; brochures; visually appealing statements; and material associated with the service (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:422).

As mentioned previously (SERVQUAL being but one of several research types that can be applied) a range of other research types can be utilised when compiling a service research programme (Zeithaml et al., 2009:144). These research types include complaint solicitation; critical incident studies; requirements research; post transaction surveys; service expectation reviews; process checkpoint evaluations; mystery shopping; customer panels; lost customer research; future expectations research; and database marketing research (Zeithaml et al., 2009:144-145). Each research type has its own advantages and disadvantages and it is advisable to use a combination of services research options when attempting to assess service quality (Zeithaml et al., 2009:144-145).

Complaint solicitation is applied to attend to customers who are not satisfied and could be useful in current municipal situations where service delivery protests are prevalent (Zeithaml et al., 2009:144). Critical incident studies and requirement research are useful to identify user requirements as input for quantitative studies (Zeithaml et al., 2009:144) and could supplement surveys such as the Munidex survey (Hawes & Mohamed, 2009:1-24). Post transaction surveys aim to obtain immediate feedback on performance of service transactions (Zeithaml et al., 2009:144).

Service expectation meetings create dialogue with key users and ensure that their expectations are met, whilst process checkpoint evaluations aim to identify service problems and find a solution for them early in the service relationship (Zeithaml et al., 2009:145). Mystery shopping is a good way to measure both individual and systemic performance, and customer panels focus on the user by creating a forum for them to suggest and evaluate new service ideas (Zeithaml et al., 2009:145).

Lost customer research identifies reasons for user defection, and provides another good way to assess gaps between expectations and perceptions (Zeithaml et al., 2009:145). Lost customer research is not practical for government services because users do not have the freedom to choose their service providers. Like customer panels, future expectations research aims to evaluate new ideas, and also forecast future expectations of users (Zeithaml et al., 2009:145). This research type is useful due to its ability to explore future consumption needs and use this information to assist in planning. Database marketing research identifies the individual requirements of customers by using information technology (Zeithaml et al., 2009:145).

The above research options are explored in greater detail in 5.3.1.1 of this research study, when dealing with service assessment in the public sector. Although these research options

were created for private sector services, some of them can be applied in the public service domain, for example complaint solicitation, which could help to minimise the occurrence of disruptive service protests. Another example is mystery shopping, which could have a significant impact in terms of government service image and the mentality of employees if know that somebody may be assessing them at that very moment. Other options such as database marketing research are impractical for government because not all citizens have equal access to information technology.

The above analyses have presented the research options available for the design and implementation of a service research programme.

The next section will be addressing citizen evaluation. Citizen evaluation facilitates citizen involvement and perceptions and is therefore significant for service quality assessment and service improvement.

2.4. CITIZEN EVALUATION & PERCEPTIONS

Public value creation attempts to complement the improvement of basic services for citizens through strategies aimed at improving the context within which the citizens reside and to promote the development of citizenship (Bennington & Moore, 2011:33). Citizenship occupies a central place in the processes of redefining (a) what is considered to be “public” and (b) creating “public value” (Newman & Clarke, 2009:154). Both processes are key in transforming and possibly improving essential services. As national formations are transformed (which certainly was the case in South Africa post-Apartheid), it is not surprising that citizenship should also be reworked as it embodies public perceptions of citizenship (Newman & Clarke, 2009:154). States have been busy reconstructing citizenship and activating citizens by changing their status from rights entitled to individualised notions of responsibility (Newman & Clarke, 2009:163-166). The National Policy Framework on Public Participation (Department: Provincial and Local Government 2007:9) confirmed this by stating that the perspective “...needs to shift from communities waiting patiently for government to deliver, towards a set of actions that communities themselves can participate in, in partnership with the Municipality and other stakeholders”. The National Policy Framework on Public Participation (Department: Provincial and Local Government 2007:21) continued to explain the existence of a “passive ‘recipient’ mind-set with expectations of the new Government to deliver development ...” and the movement to a “... phase of partnership and negotiated development ... where communities recognise their rights but also their responsibilities, and the state has duties to respond and facilitate.”

In light of the above-mentioned discussion regarding the remaking of citizenship, this research study also investigated citizen evaluation as a means of activating citizens. Activating citizens potentially embodies the next level from the level of merely engaging citizens and seeking their inputs (i.e. public participation), to a level where citizens’ inputs translates into meaningful change - especially for those citizens who are most in need of essential services. This can be achieved through the incorporation of perceptions in public value systems by means of citizen evaluation. Citizen evaluation is based on individual perceptions of service quality which can easily be incorporated.

Perception is the process of internalising the environment (Cant et al., 2002:99) and is important because it influences the way in which people interpret communication (Hunt, 1989).

Citizen evaluation refers to the process of evaluating the quality of and satisfaction with public services by focusing on citizens' perceptions of these services (Chen et al., 2010:2).

Perceptions are obtained through the application of various citizen participatory monitoring and evaluation (PME) methods which are aimed at measuring the outcomes and outputs of service delivery (Civicus & PG Exchange, 2012:2-3). The next part of the discussion will for this reason focus on citizen PME methods as the modern version of citizen satisfaction surveys.

2.4.1. Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation

Evidence gathered after applying PME methods has revealed that the generation of accurate knowledge on citizen perceptions and experiences is critical for demanding reform in service delivery mechanisms and needs to be widely dispersed and debated at large in public forums (Civicus & PG Exchange, 2012:2). PME methods are only effective if the service providers are included in the process right from the beginning; their response to the findings of participatory monitoring and evaluation tools is of key importance to its success (Civicus & PG Exchange, 2012:2).

The role of the media in disseminating the findings and mobilising public opinion in order to bring about reform is also key to the application of these tools (Civicus & PG Exchange, 2012:2). PME methods should ideally be institutionalised and become a regular feature of government structure, in order to increase the effectiveness thereof (Civicus & PG Exchange, 2012:2). The National Policy Framework on Public Participation (Department: Provincial and Local Government 2007:12-13) encouraged the use of citizen's satisfaction surveys (or PME methods) as a means of becoming informed about the community's views on municipal delivery. Citizen satisfaction surveys are more than just a communication tool, it can also be applied in the assessment of service quality (Chen et al., 2010:2) and to inform service improvement strategies (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:v) (see 1.6.2 of this research document). The reason for this is that citizen satisfaction surveys embody citizen evaluations of Government and public services and emanate from citizens' perceptions (Cole, 1975:761). The over simplification of the role of citizen's satisfaction surveys (or PME methods) highlights the difference between public participation and citizen evaluation, with the latter being the component which, activates citizens. PME methods that are available for measuring the outcomes and outputs of service delivery include the following (Civicus & PG Exchange, 2012:2):

- **Stakeholder surveys** are valuable for increasing organisational understanding of the knowledge, attitudes, and opinions of its stakeholders.

- **Citizen Report Cards** are survey based quantitative assessments of public services based on user feedback and not on perceptions.
- **Community Scorecards (CSCs)** consist of participatory community-based monitoring and assessment which enables citizens to assess the quality of services by ranking a set of community generated indicators.
- **Social Audits** or social accountability tools combine both qualitative and quantitative methods to examine the impact of a service or project on all stakeholders.
- **Community Monitoring and Evaluation (CME)** refers to a broad approach to involve citizens in gathering evidence of governmental performance.
- **Public Expenditure Tracking (Participatory outputs tracking)** refers to methodologies for monitoring the transfer of goods or services from government to the community members.
- **Citizen charters** refer to public agreements between citizens and service delivery providers, and clearly state the expectations and standards of public service delivery (Post & Agarwal, 2011:1).

These tools can be used by citizen groups to assess the performance of government, as well as benchmark and monitor the quality of services received (Civicus & PG Exchange, 2012:1). Unlike conventional approaches that rely on external experts measuring quality and performance against a set of pre-determined indicators, participatory monitoring and evaluation tools seek to engage local citizen groups to not only provide feedback but also to actively participate (to a lesser or larger degree) in the planning and implementation of service assessment, in this way capacitating citizens to analyse, reflect and take action (Civicus & PG Exchange, 2012:1). In the next part of the discussion, the abovementioned PME tools (or methods) will be investigated.

2.4.1.1. Public expenditure tracking

Public expenditure tracking (PET) involves tracing the flow of allocated public resources (which are intended for the provision of public goods or services) from origin to destination and to assists governments, citizens and civil society organizations to ensure that public resources reach their intended recipients (Malena, 2012:1). PET can assist in detecting systems inefficiencies or corruption in the transfer of public goods or services and in this way, contributes towards ensuring transparent, accountable and effective public financial management (Malena, 2012:1).

Conventionally, PET includes both quantitative and qualitative research and can be performed at local, district or sub-national spheres of Government (Malena, 2012:1). Extensive PET undertakings, for example the World Bank's Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys (PET'S), involve researchers from both national and grassroots levels to track the resources flow from high spheres of Government through the various layers to the final recipients (Malena, 2012:1). Diagram 2-9 illustrates the PET process.

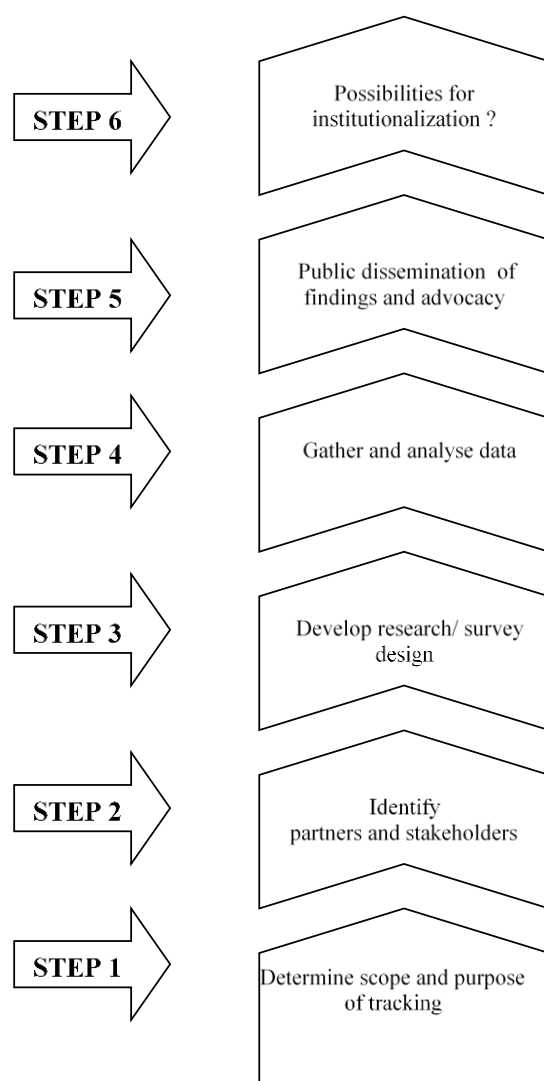


Diagram 2-9 : The PET process

Source: Malena (2012:1-4)

The value of PET lies in the fact that it is aimed at increasing public financial transparency and through broadcasting the financial flow of public resources (Malena, 2012:4). However, experience revealed that institutionalised expenditure tracking is more effective than once-off exercises (Malena, 2012:4) which means that PET should preferable be institutionalised and be part of government performance evaluation processes. PET is also an effective way of

dealing with instances where there is potential for corruptive practices regarding public services and goods (Malena, 2012:4). It needs to be borne in mind that access to information on relevant accounts; financial reports; and expenditure records may be limited, and other avenues have to be relied upon, such as civil society organisations in collaboration with local service providers to track transfers (Malena, 2012:5).

2.4.1.2. Community monitoring and evaluation

Community monitoring and evaluation (CME) refers to the process through which local communities receiving services, measure the quality and quantity such services and other government activities from which benefit is derived (McDonald, 2012:1). The objective of CME is not only to collect data about government performance, but also to strengthen the relationship between citizens and the state. This can be achieved through informing citizens of local communities about their entitlements, i.e. promises made to them by government, as well as the tools to ensure they receive such entitlements (McDonald, 2012:1).

CME is aimed at not merely monitoring access to services and the quality of services, but also to monitor the response of government to incidents of human rights violations, environmental degradation, contracts with the private sector, and tracking implementation of public policy (McDonald, 2012:1). CME is attained through the following process, as illustrated in Diagram 2-10 (McDonald, 2012:2-5).

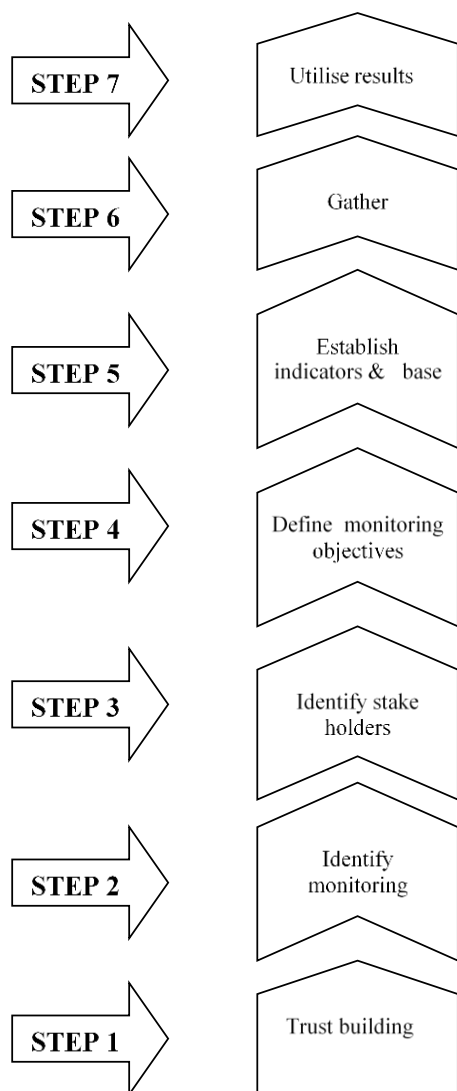


Diagram 2-10: The community monitoring and evaluation (CME) process

Source: McDonald (2012:1)

It is believed that CME is more of an approach, rather than a specific technique and is aimed at involving citizens in gathering evidence of government performance, and is aimed at the following: ensuring that citizens in local communities are aware of entitlements and are able to hold governments accountable; strengthening relations between governments and citizens, ensuring governments are fulfilling their promises; and ensuring government actions reduce poverty and truly impacts impoverished communities (McDonald, 2012:1).

2.4.1.3. Social audits

A social audit involves both the users and the service providers, and entails a process by which the expected and unexpected impacts of a service or programme are systematically examined (Pekkonen & Sadashiva, 2012:1). Users and service providers compare the real benefits that have accrued with the expected benefits, while also focusing on the unexpected impacts (Pekkonen & Sadashiva, 2012:1), to ensure that a service or programme is designed and implemented in the manner that is most suitable for the prevailing (local) conditions and reflects the priorities and preferences of those affected by it (Pekkonen & Sadashiva, 2012:1). The findings of the audit are shared with all the stakeholders, and a process of implementing changes is initiated where challenges can be identified (Pekkonen & Sadashiva, 2012:1).

The function of a social audit is to verify how programmes and services were executed, with the aim to improve them in terms of the various objectives (be it social, community or environmental) (Pekkonen & Sadashiva, 2012:1). By undertaking a systematic assessment of public records and user feedback, a social audit strives to improve a programme or public service and will typically focus on strengths and weaknesses, as well as successes and failures (Pekkonen & Sadashiva, 2012:1). In the case of state institutions, social audits supplement traditional financial audits to assist government departments and institutions to evaluate their overall performance and finally compare public perceptions and their stated core values (Pekkonen & Sadashiva, 2012:1).

How does a social audit work in practice or, better stated, how is it achieved? Pekkonen and Sadashiva (2012:2-4) provide the answer to this, and state that it is achieved through a process which adheres to the steps illustrated in Diagram 2-11.

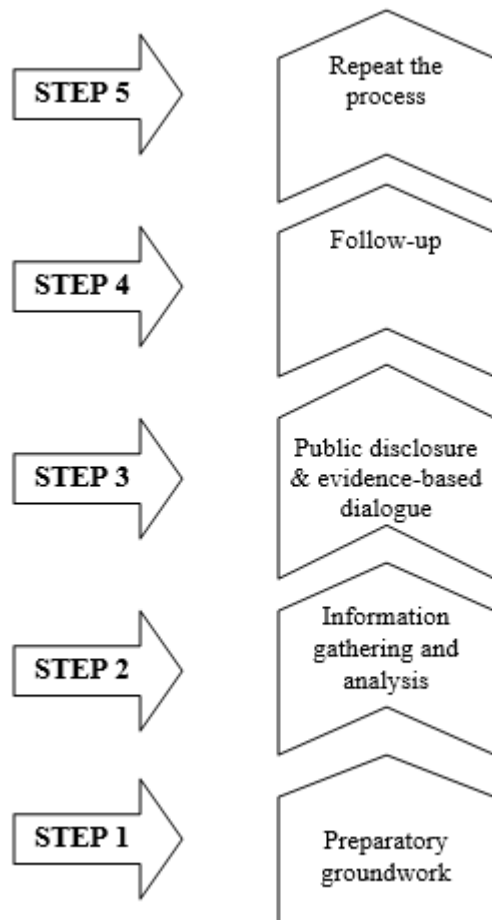


Diagram 2-11: The social audit process

Source: Pekkonen and Sadashiva (2012:3-4)

The benefits and possible challenges of social audits, can be summarised as follows. The most significant benefit of a social audit is that it can engage citizens and to focus their attention on public service issues by the mere act of participating in such an audit. It can be said that social audits are effective in raising citizen awareness regarding public service delivery and acutely emphasise the status quo of current service levels.

Conversely, social audits may also cause service providers and policy makers to feel criticised and may (if not dealt with in a sensitive matter) inflame arouse emotions in those who are “exposed”, which can lead to unnecessary conflict and uncooperativeness (Pekkonen & Sadashiva, 2012:5). However, if social audits are handled with the necessary social discernment, the outcomes can be very positive and leave service providers and policy makers with the feeling or perception that the goal of the audit is to bring improvement and not to assign blame (Pekkonen & Sadashiva, 2012:5). In this way, a performance process which includes social audits may bring about positive consequences for service providers and policy

makers such as improving understanding of citizens' concerns and motivate the former to actively address such concerns, which may even in the end lead to improved delivery of public services (Pekkonen & Sadashiva, 2012:4). On a higher level, social audits can eventually lead to improved transparency by creating a citizenry demanding greater access to information and actively participating in service delivery planning and implementation (Pekkonen & Sadashiva, 2012:4).

Other aspects of social audits that deserve consideration, are resourcing and costs (Pekkonen & Sadashiva, 2012:4). An audit of this nature, whether on a local or national level, requires external funding, which renders it as an accessory rather than a necessity in the service quality assessment process (Pekkonen & Sadashiva, 2012:4). It is therefore advisable that social audits should complement conventional financial and organisational audits, due to the costs involved.

2.4.1.4. Community scorecards

The Community scorecard (CSC) process or community voice card enables citizens to verbalise their assessment of the quality and accessibility of services (Pekkonen, 2012b:1). CSC enables opportunity for direct dialogue between citizens and public service providers, eliciting public accountability whilst simultaneously increasing the responsiveness of public service providers (Pekkonen, 2012b:1).

The greatest benefit of the CSC method of monitoring and evaluating public services is that its relatively easy to use and flexible in its application and (Pekkonen, 2012b:3) and therefore can be used repeatedly to form part of a continuous service monitoring and evaluation process communicating citizen feedback and service provider response to such feedback in return (as illustrated in Figure1-4). In this way a potentially sustainable cyclical communication or feedback loop between citizenry and government as service provider can be established and disgruntled communities especially can be approached regarding public services. It also provides mechanisms for direct feedback between citizens or users and the public service providers and generates performance criteria for benchmarking which renders it optimally suitable for subsequent performance monitoring and evaluation (Pekkonen, 2012b:3).

The greatest challenge with the CSC process is that it may, like the social audit process, create animosity on the part of service providers and policy makers in that they might experience this feedback as either threatening or not important enough (Pekkonen, 2012b:3), thereby mitigating information and feedback which might be crucial to performance improvement

through the process of monitoring and evaluation of public services. It is therefore important to sensitise public service providers and policy makers to the value and practical benefits of citizen feedback (which inevitably contains citizens' service perceptions) and engage them in the initial stages of the CSC process (Pekkonen, 2012b:3), to minimise the impact of them reacting negatively to the citizen feedback reception stage of the CSC process.

The CSC process may be mapped out as illustrated in Diagram 2-12:

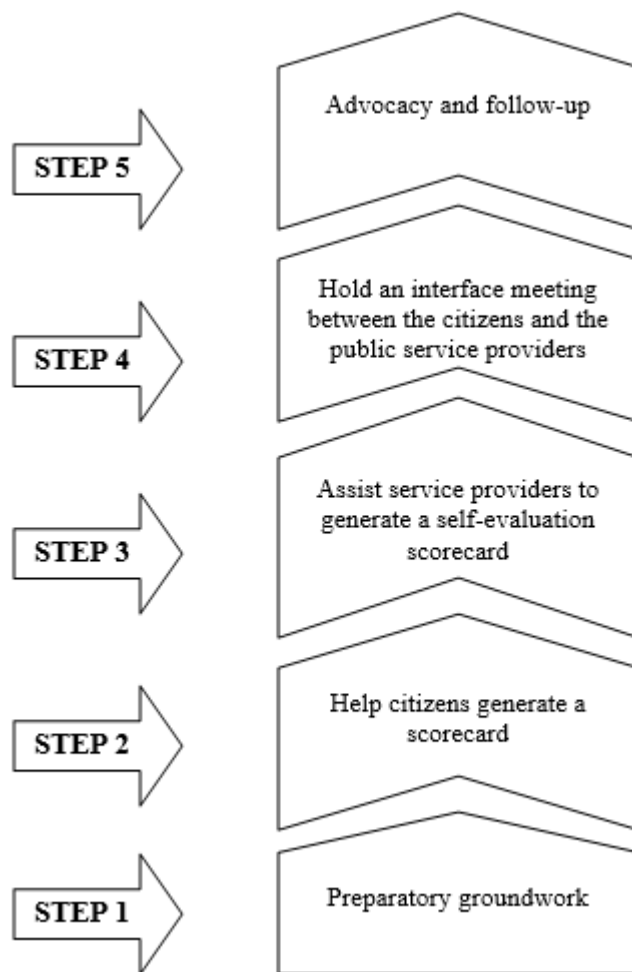


Diagram 2-12: The community scorecard (CSC) process

Source: Pekkonen (2012b:1-2)

The CSC process requires consistent management of service providers as well as citizen expectations (Pekkonen, 2012b:3-4). Service providers at local level may not always be in a position to institute the required changes, and it is imperative that citizens understand the restrictive environment in which some service providers have to operate and not become disillusioned if proposed solutions cannot be implemented, or do not result into positive changes (Pekkonen, 2012b:3-4). The same can be said for service providers, in that the implementers of the CSC process should also manage the hopes on the side of service

providers to minimise their disillusionment and potential cynicism towards the CSC process and the importance of citizen feedback (Pekkonen, 2012b:4).

2.4.1.5. Citizen report cards

Citizen Report Cards (CRC's) are applied as a tool to engage citizens through participatory surveys that strive to solicit user feedback regarding the quality and performance of public service to raise citizen awareness (Pekkonen, 2012a:1). The key feature of CRC's is that survey findings are placed in the public domain, promoting transparency and public accountability but also creating external pressure to ensure that public service reforms take place (Pekkonen, 2012a:1;4).

This type of survey, based on public opinion emanating from citizens' actual experiences of public services which was gained over time, is most effective when applied over a prolonged period of time to assist in benchmarking trends over a long timeframe and pointing out irregular service trends (Pekkonen, 2012a:1). CRC's provide a collective reflection of citizens' feedback on the performance of public service providers and quantifies citizen feedback using a representative sample and systemically gathering and disseminating information regarding public service performance (Pekkonen, 2012a:1).

The CRC process may be mapped as illustrated in Diagram 2-13..

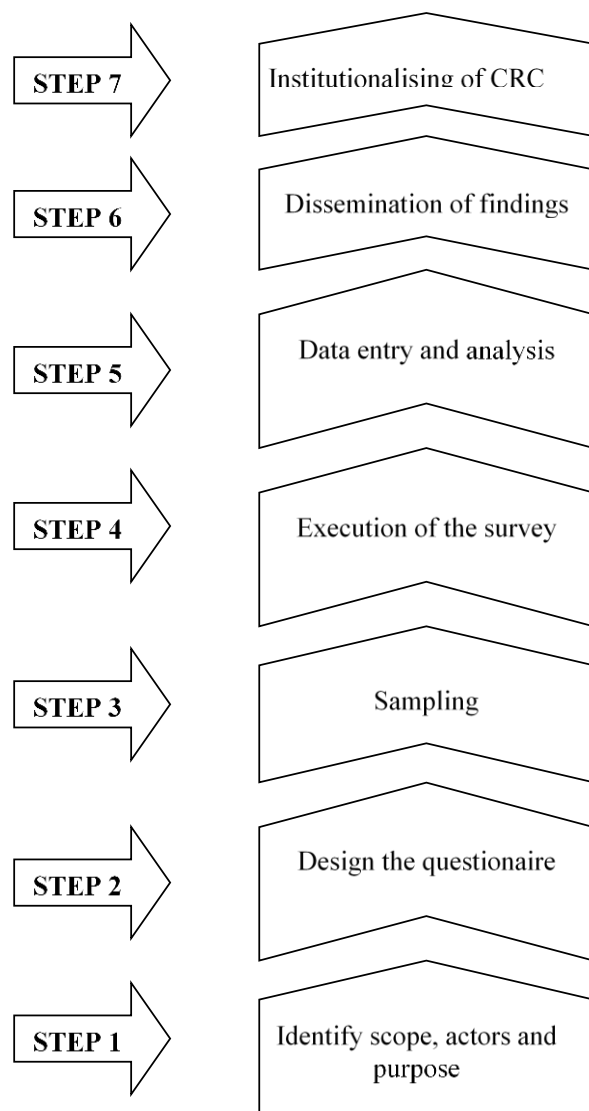


Diagram 2-13: The citizen report card (CRC) process

Source: Pekkonen (2012a:2-3)

The most significant advantage of a CRC is that it provides practical, scientifically analysed and quantified knowledge, which enhances its credibility and makes it difficult for providers to mitigate its results (Pekkonen, 2012a:4). The most significant downfall of CSCs is that it constitutes large-scale surveys and can become costly and time consuming. Effective CRCs also require the support of the media and may not be as effective in countries where the media is censored (Pekkonen, 2012a:4). CRCs also require the right political climate: it requires participating countries to be open to civil society and external pressure in order to give effect to public service reforms (Pekkonen, 2012a:4). As with any survey, possible institutional resistance which might emanate from the survey results and changes proposed by it should

be managed carefully and citizen expectations should be managed to avoid disillusionment (Pekkonen, 2012:4-5).

As with CRC's, IDP's also declare their commitment and information publicly by being placed in the public domain where citizens and a variety of stakeholders can access it (Pekkonen, 2012:1, 4). In this way, commitment of intent is expressed by Government and a tool that citizens and stakeholders can use to hold government accountable for their actions, is created.

2.4.1.6. Stakeholder surveys

Stakeholder surveys can be applied to gain better understanding of the perceptions, attitudes, experiences, knowledge and interests of internal and external stakeholders, in order to make improvements to the service delivery process (Sadashiva, 2012:1). Such surveys include all those individuals and organisations that are affected by an organisation (in this case Government) and its activities and constitutes a questionnaire-based quantitative tool for gathering information from sampled stakeholders regarding such stakeholders' preferences, views, experience, interests and constraints (Sadashiva, 2012:1). The information gathered in this fashion is a critical input for effective performance management. The stakeholder survey process is illustrated by Diagram 2-14.

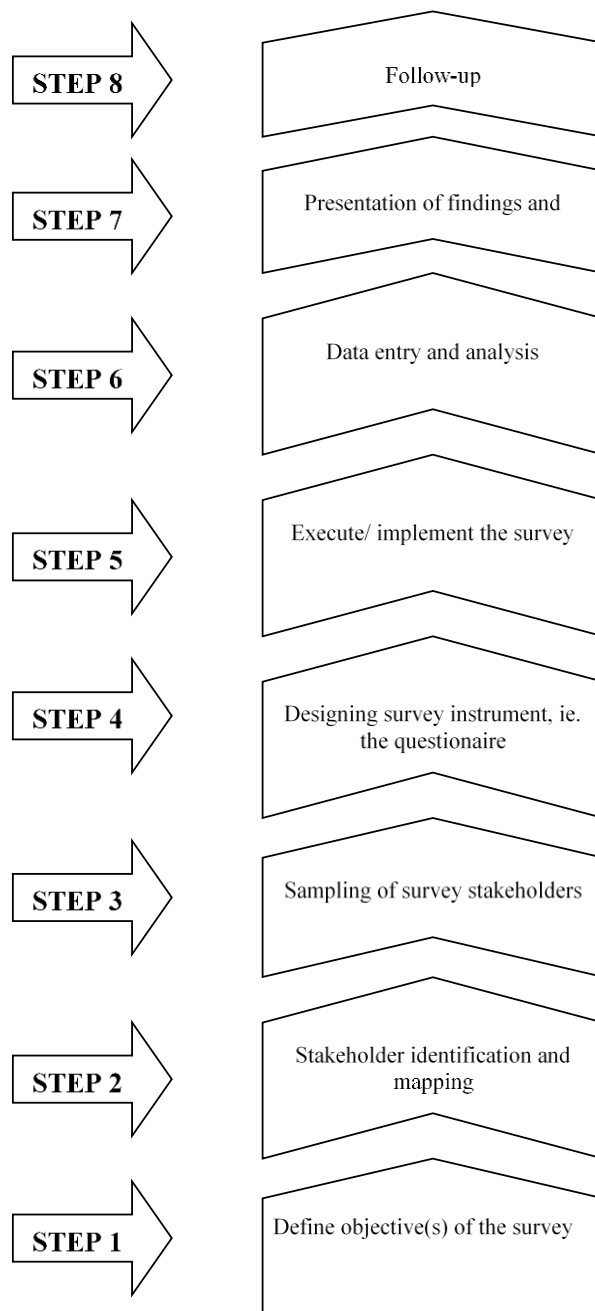


Diagram 2-14: The stakeholder survey process

Source: Sadashiva (2012:2-5)

The key strength of stakeholder surveys is that these surveys are not restricted to the direct users (or in this instance citizens) of the specific service, but also incorporates a wide range of individuals who and organisations that have various interests in the services in question (i.e. public services) (Sadashiva, 2012:1). The challenge would be to manage these diverse perceptions and opinions and clarify the expectations and the benefits at stake from the very onset of the survey process (Sadashiva, 2012:6). Nonetheless, the diverse inputs in

stakeholder surveys add to the depth and quality of the survey findings, and also introduce information that is relevant, recent and practical. A major obstacle for this survey would be resourcing in terms of time, funding, expertise and the wide geographic scope.

IDP's also contains elements of stakeholder surveys, which (as previously mentioned) are valuable to increase organisational understanding of the knowledge, attitudes, opinions perceptions; experiences and knowledge and interests of their internal and external stakeholders of its stakeholders (Sadashiva, 2012:1). The IDP, in its consultative process with local citizens and communities to obtain their views on development or service priorities, also (like stakeholder survey questionnaires) draws on citizen opinions; knowledge; and experience but actually also absorbs citizens' service (dis)satisfaction, as well as their underlying perceptions and attitudes which are contained in the service prioritising process (Mouton, 2004:55-56).

2.4.1.7. Citizen charters

Citizen charters (CCs) constitute public agreements between citizens and service delivery providers, and clearly state the expectations and standards of public service delivery (Post & Agarwal, 2011:1). CCs were introduced by the United Kingdom in the early 1990s and are now being used in countries such as the United States, Kenya, India, Jamaica, and Mexico (Post et al., & Agarwal, 2011:1).

The key characteristics of effective CCs include clear and simple language; realistic and measurable performance indicators; a dedicated grievance redress mechanism; and an effective public relations strategy (Post & Agarwal, 2011:1). CCs assist governments in that they provide a useful way to refine service delivery processes; monitor effectiveness; and improve overall performance (Post & Agarwal, 2011:1). CCs are important for task teams, because they strengthen both the supply (such as clearly outlined performance standards and more customer-focused service delivery) of and the demand (such as increased citizens' awareness about their rights and providing citizens with the necessary information to hold government accountable) for good governance, in this way enhancing the quality of services and reducing opportunities for corruption (Post & Agarwal, 2011:1-2). CCs have been found to be suited for public services such as water, sanitation, energy, public sector management, health and education (Post & Agarwal, 2011:2). Diagram 2-15 depicts the steps that need to be followed during a CC process.

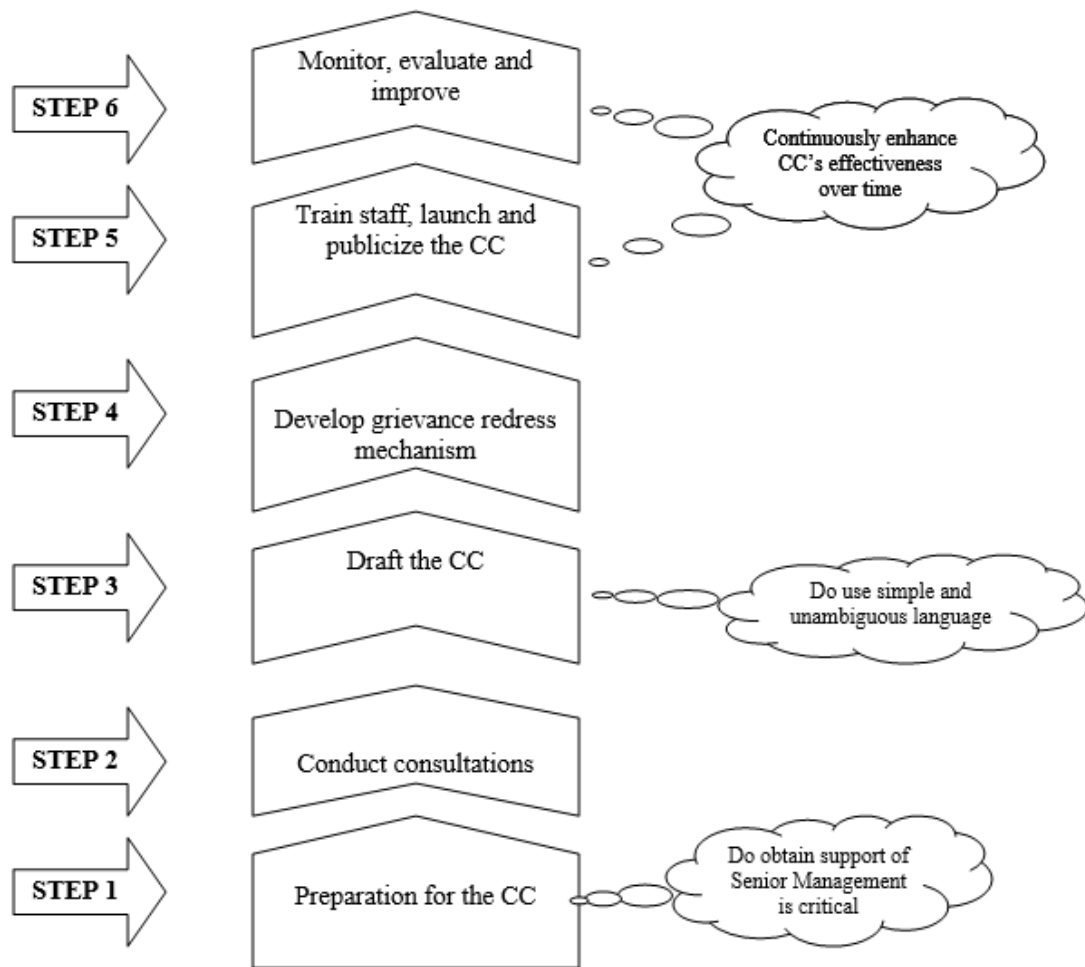


Diagram 2-15: The citizen charter (CC) process

Source: Post & Agarwal, (2011:3,12)

A key feature of the CC is that it provides a clear understanding of standards of service delivery, and includes specific details such as timetables; service user fees; and options for grievance redress, which serve to manage service expectation and provide altogether unambiguous service performance standards (Post & Agarwal, 2011:3). However, if citizens and stakeholders are not sufficiently aware of the CC, its purpose, or any of its specific details they are unable to hold public service providers accountable (Post & Agarwal, 2011:14). This situation can be avoided through good public relations, advocacy, visibility in service delivery locations, creating a demand for the CC and increasing citizens' and stakeholders' awareness of their rights and responsibilities as far as the CC is concerned (Post & Agarwal, 2011: 14).

The IDP has elements of the CC in the sense that it declares the development goals, objectives, and priorities under specific headings such as strategic focus areas, programmes, projects, project manager, budgets, timeframes and targets and constitutes a method for planning future development in the area (Ethekewini Municipality, 2009:15-52). It also attaches

practical information to these goals, objectives and priorities such as time frames and monetary values. The IDP is very similar to the CC, but only for development planning, and it can be utilised to provide service performance standards (Post & Agarwal, 2011:3) to contribute and refine the service delivery processes, monitor effectiveness and, in this way, improve overall performance (Post & Agarwal, 2011:1). It is important to bear in mind that other service delivery standards (e.g. options for grievance redress) which are essential elements of a CC must still be present (Post & Agarwal, 2011:3) In this way citizens are provided with key tools for holding government and service delivery agencies to account and together uphold and improve service standards.

The Diagram 2-16 below represents a scale that places the various PME methods or tools on a continuum indicating the extent to which each emphasises citizen perception delivery (Civicus & PG Exchange, 2012:2). This perception occurrence scale for PME methods illustrates which PME methods are most suitable for the collection citizen perceptions (Civicus & PG Exchange, 2012:2).

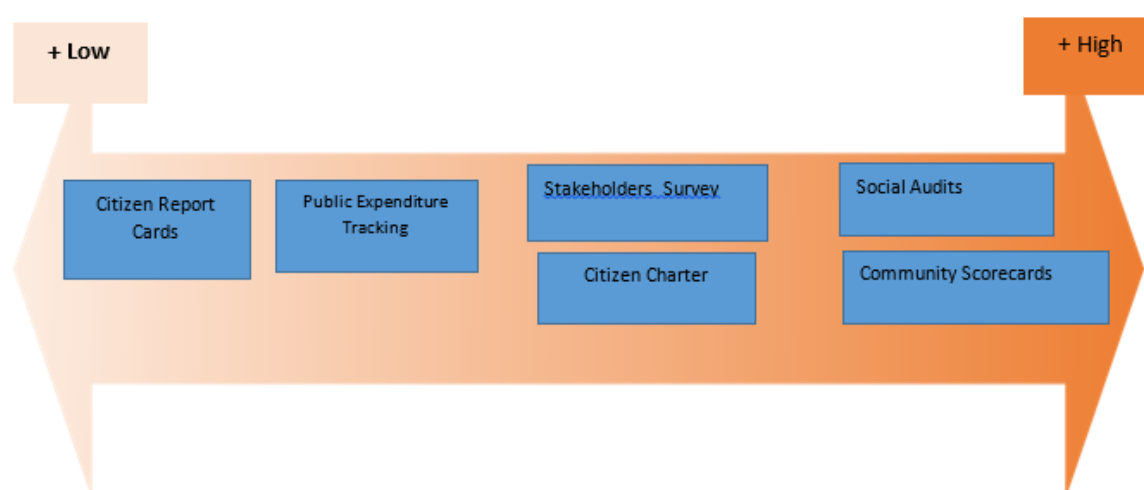


Diagram 2-16: The perception occurrence scale for PME methods illustrates which PME methods are most suitable for obtaining perceptions

Source: Civicus & PG Exchange (2012:2)

According to Fielding (1993:99), community members should be assisted to have a clear understanding of their perception biases, to positively deal with their perceptions; and the officials should make a special effort to understand perceptions other than their own. Government should strive to create supportive situations to encourage cooperation and a willingness to cooperate should be developed (Fielding, 1993:99). Officials should also give

credit to ordinary people not known for their particular knowledge or capabilities, but who are still able to contribute meaningfully; and acknowledge that they can learn from citizens. These guidelines provide a solid basis of understanding and a “code of conduct” which can be used to guide citizen-government relations during the process of citizen evaluation, to ensure that the maximum benefit is derived from the process. As much as citizen evaluations and inputs are crucial to service quality assessment, it is unrealistic to expect that all perceptions should be incorporated. The next part of the discussion is focused on the prioritisation of perceptions.

2.4.1.8. Prioritising Perceptions

After the collection of citizen perceptions, one should bear in mind that there must be a prioritising process because not all perceptions can be considered as carrying the same importance. The priority index (P-Index) was developed by research analyst De Wet Schutte to assist in grading citizens’ perceived issues and is a scale that enables the calculation of the priority (or weight) of a perception by subtracting the satisfaction with the issues from its importance (Mouton, 2004:55-56). Diagram 2-17 below illustrates the calculation process for prioritising citizens’ perceptions.

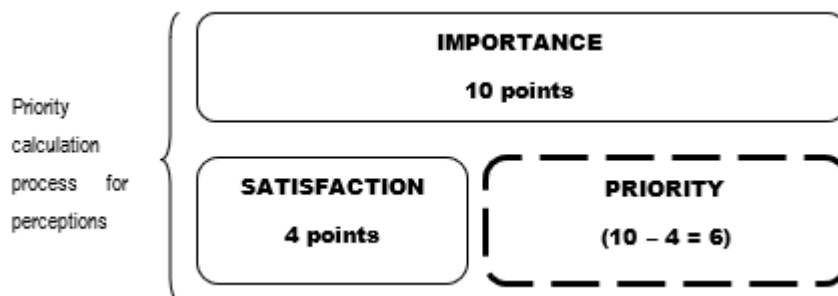


Diagram 2-17: The priority calculation process of citizen perceptions, based on De Wet Schutte’s P-Index (perception index) model

Source: Mouton (2004:55)

The points awarded for “importance” and “satisfaction” are obtained from a scale on which citizens (or participants in the survey) physically indicate their perceptions on a scale from 1 to 11 (Mouton, 2004:55). This process can be applied when dealing with multiple perceptions which need to be prioritised before being including as part of the performance evaluation process.

During the next part of the discussion, the concept of communication and the way in which it relates to citizen evaluation, will be addressed.

2.5. COMMUNICATION

Communication or human interaction provides the broader theoretical context for citizen evaluation and public service delivery, as discussed previously. Having evolved over time, the current meaning that is ascribed to communication is that it involves an interactive process between a sending and a receiving party (Gibson & Hodgetts, 1991:5). During this process, the parties involved transfer numerous stimuli which later becomes messages (Ross, 1983:8) to each other and such messages are not merely received by the parties involved but also understood by them (Gibson & Hodgetts, 1991:5). The messages pass through communication filters which also influence the meaning that the sender and receiver attach to the message that they receive (Reece & Brand, 1997:32).

A closer look at the various approaches to communication relevant to this research, will be taken in the next part of the discussion. Each approach highlights a different aspect of communication that is key to this research.

2.5.1. Communication Approaches

There are various theoretical approaches to communication; all of which attempt to describe and capture the essence of the communication process. These approaches to communication include the mechanistic, the humanistic, the contextual and the group approach. Each approach highlights a different aspect of communication key to this research.

2.5.1.1. Mechanistic approach

In the mechanistic approach, the principles of information theory are applied to human communication (O'Sullivan, Hartley, Saunders & Fiske, 1989:43). The message is created at a source; transformed (or encoded) into a signal; and transmitted through a channel to a receiver (Shanon & Weaver, 1949:21). The receiver then decodes the signal and transmits the message to its final destination (Shanon & Weaver. 1949:21).

The greatest disadvantage of this model is that information is transmitted but there is no feedback mechanism to indicate interaction (O'Sullivan et al., 1989:43). The reason for this is that this model was intended to describe electronic communication and did not make provision for human aspects of communication. The humanistic approach emerged because of this shortcoming (O'Sullivan et al., 1989:43).

2.5.1.2. Humanistic approach

The humanistic approach prescribes that the message is sent to the receiver through a medium, and feedback regarding the message is sent back to the sender (Shanon & Weaver, 1949:21), creating a communication cycle. This model makes provision for human interaction and addresses the criticism on the mechanistic communication model. The humanistic model also “maps” the communication process simply but clearly and indicates the factors that could potentially influence the transfer of messages, namely the environment; the communication purposes; and the communication skills (Shanon & Weaver, 1949:21).

Other factors influencing the sending of messages include whether the message has been sent intentionally or unintentionally; and if the message is verbal or non-verbal. Non-verbal communication refers to the transfer and receiving of messages “without words”, and the ability to decipher and understand how these non-verbal signals operate during interaction (Fielding, 1993:113). Verbal or oral communication refers to the spoken words or messages and can take place directly (i.e. face to face), or indirectly (Van Staden & Marx 2002:26).

Although the humanistic approach makes provision for externalities that could possibly influence human interaction, greater attention should be paid to the environment in which communication takes place.

2.5.1.3. The contextual approach

In this approach attention is paid to the contextualisation of the communication process. Schramm’s communication process model explains how the source generates the signal and the encoder sends the message. The signal is received by the decoder, which decodes the signal and converts it into a message before it reaches the destination. In other words, the source generates a signal, but by the time it reaches the destination the signal has been decoded into a message. The importance of Schramm’s model lies in the fact that each individual has a frame of reference according to which meaning is assigned to various messages and the frame of reference is made up of individual learning experiences, abilities and immediate situations (Schramm, 1954:172). According to Schramm’s model, effective communication occurs in those areas where the different frames of reference overlap (Schramm, 1954:172).

Including the context of communication into the communication process is important for Local Government because, unlike the private sector, Local Government deals directly with developmental challenges relating to poverty, inequality, and economic development and

therefore will interact with their “clientele” (i.e. citizens) in a different context than that of corporate organisations. Local Government also needs to grasp that, if their frame of reference does not overlap with that of their citizens, constructive and meaningful communication cannot take place. The frame of reference or context shapes citizen or individual perception, because perceptions are a product of internalising the context (Cant et al., 2002:99) and will, as mentioned previously, influence the way in which communication takes place (Hunt, 1989). Perceptions include the frame(s) of reference, and communication is said to be most effective when the various frames of reference overlap. The contextual approach to communication is illustrated by Diagram 2-18.

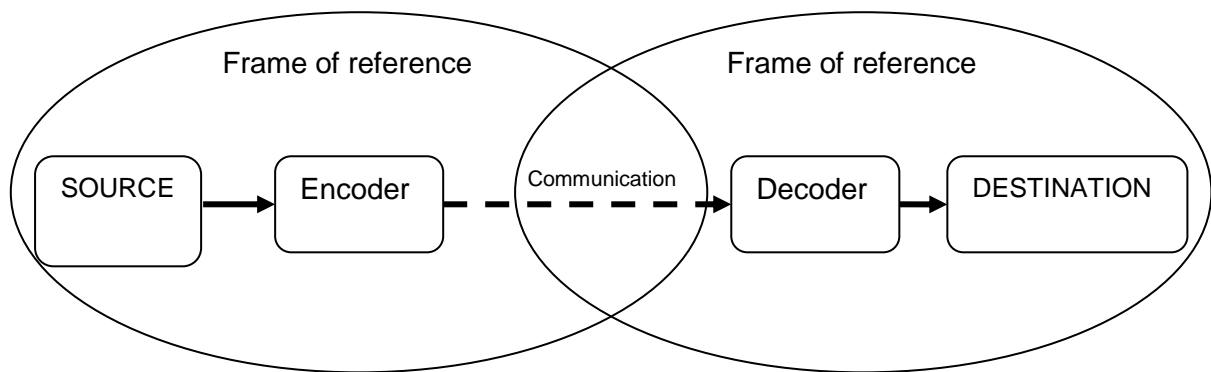


Diagram 2-18: The contextual approach

Source: Schramm (1954:172)

Another important aspect of communication is interacting with large groups (i.e. the group dimension) and dealing with the complexities of communicating with multiple parties. This aspect is addressed by the group approach to communication (Swanepoel & De Beer, 1996:1).

2.5.1.4. Group approach

Communication often takes place between numerous sets of parties and the structural model, explaining communication on various levels; with several people; and a circular course was developed for this reason (Swanepoel & De Beer, 1996:1). The structural model facilitates communication between numerous people or parties, for instance when addressing large audiences or when people communicate indirectly to others (Swanepoel & De Beer 1996:1).

Diagram 2-19 shows a communication process between the municipal council and its municipal administration and serves as an illustration of the group approach. It represents communication between three sets of parties. It also illustrates the SDBIP process and how closely it is linked to communication.

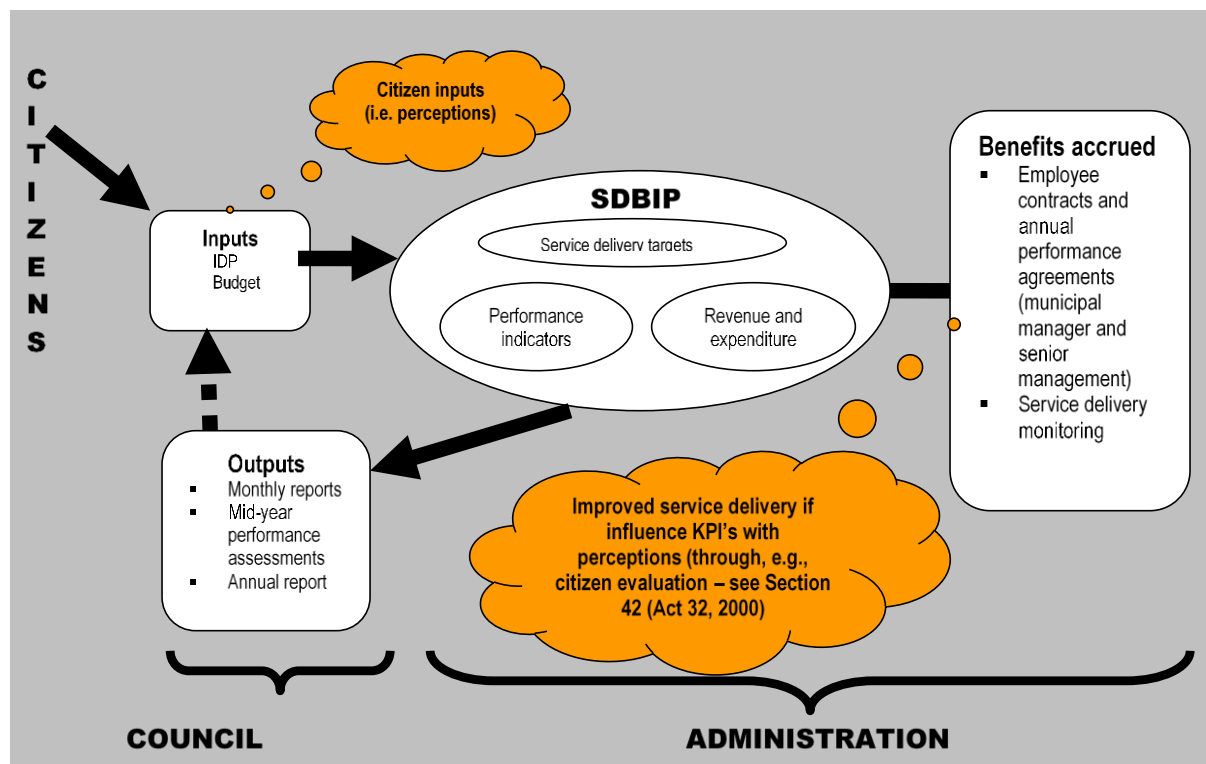


Diagram 2-19: The group approach: a communication process between municipal council and municipal administration

Sources: Adapted from Ethekwini Municipality, 2009:3 and the Municipal Systems Act (Republic of South Africa, 2000)

The following part of the discussion provides an attempt to analyse the levels or degrees of citizen interaction with government and at which level citizen evaluation can function most effectively. In other words: what type of interaction is required for citizen evaluation?

2.5.2. Communication levels: Perception and quality of citizen inputs

Research conducted in 2007 (Buccus & Hicks, 2007:111-114) revealed results regarding how the South African civil society perceives citizens' role in policy making. The research showed that civil society perceives policy making as an elite-driven process functioning largely to the exclusion of the public and affected stakeholders (Buccus & Hicks, 2007:111-114). Attempts to facilitate community input into policy making are perceived as superficial and disconnected from the real power base of decision making, whether at political or bureaucratic level (Buccus & Hicks, 2007:111-114). Most processes are viewed as (a) presenting predetermined positions and programmes for limited feedback; (b) for information-sharing purposes only; or (c) for creating limited opportunities for society to raise concerns (Buccus & Hicks, 2007:111-114). Ultimately, they make very little substantive difference to decisions regarding policy (Buccus & Hicks, 2007:111-114). These perceptions prove very little support for the credibility of, and faith in citizen consultation, which currently does not enable citizens to participate meaningfully (Buccus & Hicks, 2007:111-114).

Informing the community signifies the most basic and superficial level of communication or engagement with citizens and communities (DANCED, 1998:7). The process of informing citizens includes the dissemination of relevant information and making this information accessible to citizens. There is no feedback from citizens and the process is initiated by Government. An example of communication at this level is present during political road shows and Government campaigns.

The next level of communication is consultation, which occurs when citizens are involved before the final decision making (DANCED, 1998:7). Consultation-level communication is more inclusive than information-level communication (DANCED, 1998:7) although it does not necessarily mean that consultation translates into impact on decision-making processes. The final level of communication is interaction, where citizens are incorporated in a process of joint decision making with government (DANCED, 1998:7). An example of this kind of communication input can be found in the consultative process of the municipal IDP. The various levels of communication are illustrated by Diagram 2-20.

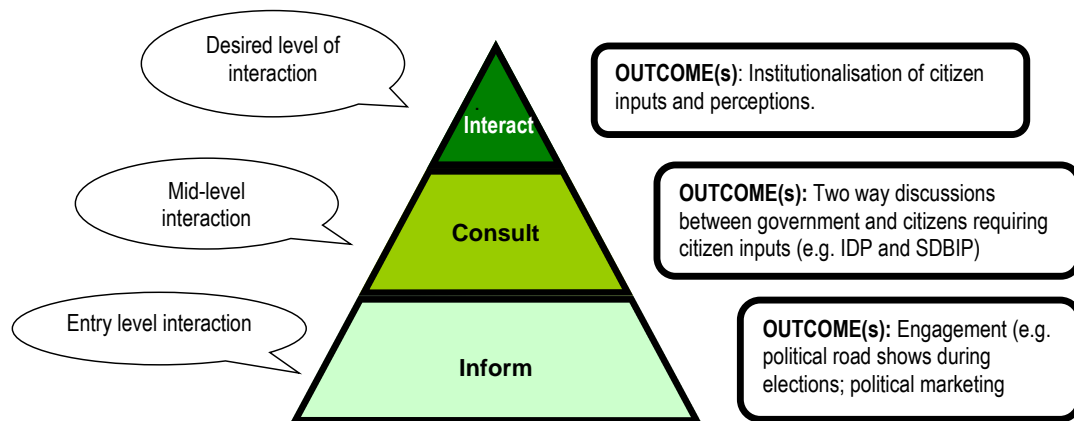


Diagram 2-20: Levels of communication.

Source: DANCED (1998:7)

The apex of the triangle signifies the quality of the inputs that is required for citizen evaluation to become operational and effective. This level and of communication encompasses aspects that are essential to successful citizen evaluation implementation such as (a) joint decision-making; and (b) direct impact on service delivery; and greater influence on performance evaluation. It is at this interactive level of communication between government and citizens that institutionalised citizen evaluation can operate and yield meaningful results. This is important for the purposes of this research as it indicates the communication level that is required to facilitate citizen evaluation and meaningful contributions in terms of citizen perceptions as an input to the communication process between Government and its citizens.

2.5.3. Public Service Assessment: Ambit of Communication

The concept of communication was explored for the purposes of this research. As stated previously, political communication includes the purposeful interaction about political affairs (McNair,1999:4), while development communication is defined as a form of communication which occurs during development initiatives aimed at government, NGO and community-based organisations (Besette,2004).

The allocation and distribution of public services and resources is as much a political matter as it is a humanistic matter (Swanepoel, 1997:2). It is for this reason that this research incorporated political communication as part of its theoretical structure. The inclusion of development communication is important because the PME methods (as discussed) employed during citizen evaluation require the media to some extent, for them to operate successfully.

PME methods are reliant on the media to exert the pressure which is necessary for government to react and reform. The advantage of combining PME with development communication is that the latter consist of specific methods and media to effectively reach target community groups (Barker, 2001:9-12). This includes community printed media (for example local newspapers); interactive media (for example community radio); and community online media such as cellular phones (Barker, 2001:9-12).

Ideally, the communication media involved in political communication should perform five crucial functions (McNair, 1999:21) for the dissemination of the survey findings and the mobilisation of public opinion (Civicus & PG Exchange, 2012:2). Communication media must perform a monitoring function, which means that it informs citizens of what is happening around them (McNair, 1999:21). Secondly, communication media should educate citizens as to the meaning and significance of the “facts”; the trail of events as seen from an objective viewpoint (McNair, 1999:21). Thirdly, communication media must provide a platform for public political discourse, facilitating the formation of public opinion and feeding that opinion back to the public (McNair, 1999:21). A fourth function of communication media is to give publicity to governmental and political institutions – public opinion can only matter if it has an influence over the “objective” political reality (McNair, 1999:21). Finally, the media serves as a channel for the advocacy of political viewpoints (McNair, 1999:21).

2.6. CONCLUSION

The key concepts of the theoretical framework have been discussed in this literature review. The literature review started with the concept of collective services where its nature was analysed by comparing collective services with its antithesis in order to determine those specific aspects of collective services that should be considered when embarking on a service improvement initiative (Gildenhuys & Knipe, 2000:57). The discussion also included the unique approach to value that is typical of the public sector (Bennington & Moore, 2011:47). This constitutes another key characteristic of collective services. Understanding value in the public sector context is important when developing service quality dimensions or measures (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:407). An overview of the alternative ways of delivering collective (or public) services were also presented to indicate different avenues available to Government in terms rendering public services.

In the analyses of citizen evaluation and perceptions, the discussion started off with the PME methods which are based on citizen evaluation and are also predominantly focused on obtaining citizens' perceptions – some to a greater extent than others, as discussed in 2.4.1 of this research document (Civicus & PG Exchange, 2012:2). The analysis of citizen evaluation and service perceptions concluded with two case examples illustrating the operation of citizen perceptions in the form of an IDP (Ethekwini Municipality, 2009:15-52); and oversight through a SDBIP by the South African Government (Ethekwini Municipality, 2009:1). The literature review also focused on the role of communication as the concept which forms the basis of the Gaps model as enabling the bridging of the customer gap (Zeithaml et al., 2009:32), or the “expectations gap” (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:21).

Now that the various composite theoretical concepts of the theoretical framework (i.e. citizen evaluation; service quality evaluation; public services; and communication) have been deconstructed and analysed, an improved understanding has been achieved in terms of the elements that are needed in the design of a framework for factoring citizen perceptions to improve public service quality. A more detailed discussion of the framework will follow in chapter 5 (i.e. the service improvement framework strategy and diagnostic instrument). This fits in with the research objective of the development of a literature overview of the key research concepts to establish the theoretical framework.

Before getting to the point where the framework can be designed, case literature regarding citizen perceptions and how this operates in the SA Government public value system must be consulted. This will provide an understanding of the extent to which citizen perceptions play a role in the SA Government public value system, and whether it truly has an impact on public service quality. Chapter 3 of this research will therefore focus on examples of selected SA case literature dealing with citizen perceptions.

3. CHAPTER 3: CITIZEN PERCEPTIONS AND THE SA PUBLIC SERVICE VALUE SYSTEM

3.1.INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to investigate the extent to which citizen perceptions have been considered in the SA public service value system, in order to give effect to the legislative requirement for citizen inputs in service prioritisation and policy making (Republic of South Africa, 1996; Republic of South Africa, 2000), as discussed in 1.4 of this research. The selected case literatures examples incorporated citizen inputs and therefore perceptions which were obtained through citizen involvement. These case literature examples include SA Government policy implementation plans, e.g. the NDP; the IDP; the SDBIP the IDP/ Budget; and the PMS implementation plan. The first example constitutes the NDP. The next part of the discussion will be devoted to obtaining an understanding of the NDP and how it is connected to citizen inputs and perceptions.

3.2.NDP AND THE IDP

As discussed previously, the NDP sets the development priorities at national level (South African Government News Agency, 2013), whilst the IDP contains the development priorities which are informed by the citizens' perceptions at municipal level. The process of development planning ensures participation from diverse stakeholders (such as business, community-based organisations, labour and youth formations) within the municipality, whilst simultaneously enabling citizens to measure municipal performance (Koma & Kuye, 2014:102). The two sets of priorities therefore need to be linked in such a way that the achievement of national level priorities contributes to the attainment of growth and municipal development objectives. The accumulated IDP priorities (as reflected by citizen perceptions) in turn ought to inform national priorities.

The NDP highlights the need to strengthen the ability of municipalities to fulfil their developmental role. Municipal IDP's need to be used more strategically to focus attention on critical priorities in the NDP that relate to their mandate, such as basic services (South African Government News Agency, 2013). Municipal IDP's should be used to focus on aspects of the NDP that fit within a municipality's core responsibilities (South African Government News Agency, 2013). This would allow the IDP process to become more manageable and the

participation aspect thereof to be more meaningful, thus helping to narrow the gap between citizens' aspirations and expectations and what can be achieved (South African Government News Agency, 2013).

The NDP recognises the importance of citizen perceptions and continues to state that Government encourages citizens to be active about their own development (Department: The Presidency of the Republic of South Africa, 2011a:411, 429). Government undertakes to work together with others in the community to advance development, resolve problems and raise the concerns of citizens, especially those in marginalised communities (Department: The Presidency of the Republic of South Africa, 2011:27). These commitments of Government make room for citizen evaluation and the implementation of PME methods, as explained in 2.4 of this research.

The next section, will be devoted to an analysis of SDBIP's and their relation to citizen perceptions.

3.3. THE SDBIP AND IDP IMPLEMENTATION

The SDBIP's, as discussed previously, are strategic financial management tools applied to ensure that decisions based on the outcomes of municipal budgets are aligned with the perceptions and priorities encapsulated in the IDP's of municipalities (Ethekewini Municipality, 2009:1). The SDBIP is an implementation plan of the approved IDP (Mogalakwena Local Municipality, 2017). As discussed, SDBIP's produce quarterly service delivery targets which are reported to (a) facilitate oversight in terms of fiscal and non-fiscal performance of the municipality; and (b) ensure the implementation of the IDP (Ethekewini Municipality, 2009:1). This is similar to PET, as mentioned previously. The SDBIP (like PET) involves administering and controlling allocated public resources and monetary budget allocations (Ethekewini Municipality, 2009:1). Both processes (i.e. SDBIP and PET) assist governments to ensure that public resources reach their intended recipients due to their monitoring and evaluative natures (Malena, 2012:1).

The SDBIP relates closely to the Government PMS. The SDBIP process is aimed at overseeing Government performance and the implementation of the IDP but is also seeing to the interests of its citizenry. The SDBIP tracks the process of delivering public services and public goods through (a) linking employee performance targets (fiscal and non-fiscal) to the

delivery of public services and goods; and then (b) monitoring those employees' fulfilment of the said targets (Ethekwini Municipality, 2009:3).

Diagram 3-21 illustrates the complex exchange between the various interrelated processes, i.e. the SDBIP, PMS and the IDP, which informs other processes such as the Long-Term Development Framework (LTDF) and the budget (Ethekwini Municipality, 2009:3). The LTDF feeds into the integrated development programme (IDP) which contains citizen inputs (i.e. priorities consisting of perceptions, attitudes and needs) obtained through the community facilitation part of the process. The SDBIP process results in the drawing up of an annual report that will continue to advise the IDP process (Ethekwini Municipality, 2009:3) and subsequent service-related processes such as the PMS.

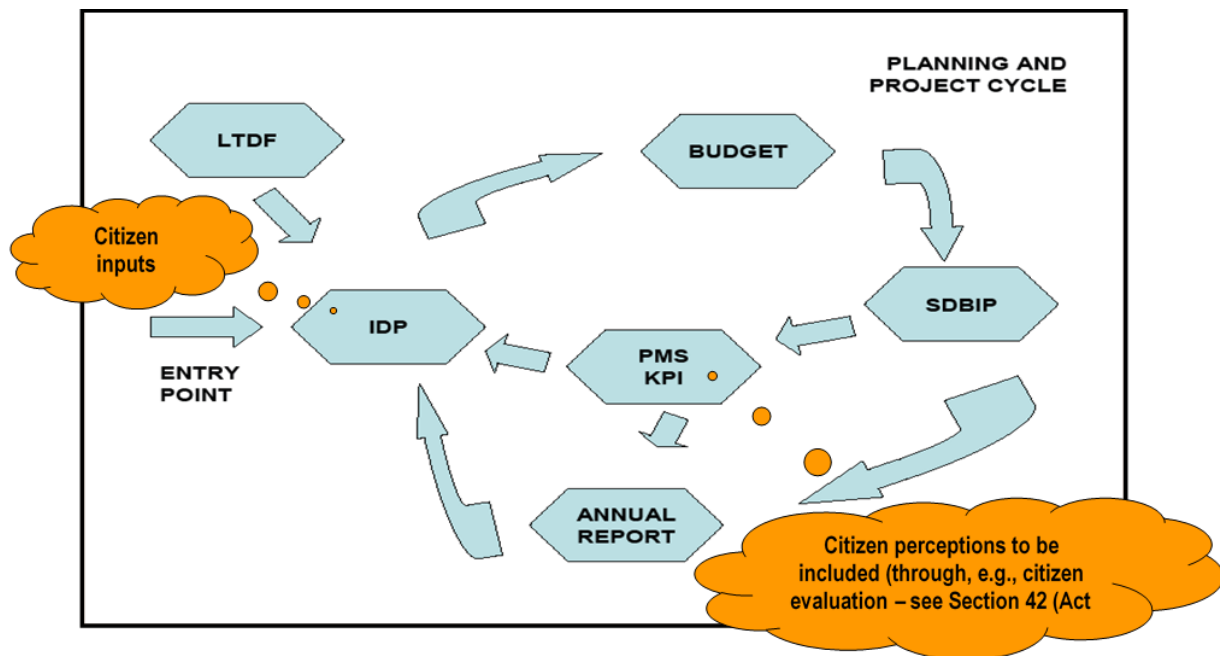


Diagram 3-21: The seamless process between the LTDF, IDP, SDBIP and PMS

Sources: Adapted from Ethekwini Municipality (2009:3) and section 42 of the Municipal Systems Act (Republic of South Africa, 2000)

The LTDF feeds into the IDP which contains citizen inputs (i.e. priorities consisting of perceptions, attitudes, and needs) obtained through the community facilitation part of the process (Ethekwini Municipality, 2009:3). The IDP is utilised to guide the budget process, which, in turn, forms the basis of the SDBIP and the subsequent development of the key performance indicators (KPIs) which are fundamental for the PMS (Ethekwini Municipality, 2009:3). Another consequence of the SDBIP is that it gives rise to the annual report, that will continue to inform the IDP process (Ethekwini Municipality, 2009:3).

The next case literature example is the IDP/PMS/Budget Process Plan. The IDP/PMS/Budget Process Plan includes the process for reviewing the municipal IDP, and also directs the IDP Review (Mogalakwena Local Municipality, 2017:3).

3.4. THE IDP, BUDGET AND PMS IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The IDP/PMS/Budget Process Plan is aimed at ensuring correct coordination between all the relevant stakeholders (Mogalakwena Local Municipality, 2017:3). The process plan enhances integration and alignment between the IDP, Budget and (PMS), and fulfils the role of an operational framework for the IDP process. In addition, it identifies the activities around the key annual statutory operational processes, which include the adoption of the budget, the IDP, the PMS and the annual report (Mogalakwena Local Municipality, 2017:3).

A series of engagements are held annually in order to host a platform for an inclusive participatory process, e.g. through community forums, specific roadshows; municipal imbizo's, intergovernmental relations forums and strategic planning workshops (Mogalakwena Local Municipality, 2017:3). The involvement of local community stakeholders is one of the main features of this review process (Mogalakwena Local Municipality, 2017:17).

The Implementation Plan, when performed at district level, serves as a coordination mechanism to ensure that interrelated parallel planning processes within the district are coordinated (Waterberg District Municipality, 2017:10). In the case of the Waterberg District Municipality, the function of the Plan is to ensure that the district IDP and local IDP's are mutually linked and can inform each other (Waterberg District Municipality, 2017:12).

The IDP and budget processes are two distinct but integrally linked processes which must be coordinated to ensure that the IDP and the budget are mutually consistent and credible⁹ (Koma et al., 2014:100). The IDP in this instance provides the framework for determining the municipal budget (Koma & Kuye, 2014:100). The process creates its own dynamics since it encompasses the involvement of external role players and interest groups, and requires accurate logistical planning and arrangements for participation (Mogalakwena Local Municipality, 2017:9).

⁹ According to the MFMA (Republic of South Africa, 2003) credibility refers to the municipality's ability and capacity to spend and deliver services in accordance with its approved budget.

The above analysis of the NDP, IDP, SDBIP, IDP, Budget and PMS, brings to light that the inclusion of citizen perceptions facilitated through community involvement processes forms part of the SA organisational service delivery arrangements. In spite of the presence of formalised practices for seeking citizens' inputs, service protests are still prevalent and are intensifying (Chigwata, 2017:3, 14). This could indicate that citizens may still feel that they (a) are not heard by Government; (b) that they need to make themselves heard through non-institutionalised means of political participation (such as protests and demonstrations) since institutionalised forms of political participation prove to be ineffective (from their perspective); and (c) that they, by protesting and demonstrating their service dissatisfaction, are contributing towards service improvement. According to Cornwall (2002:23), any mode of political participation,¹⁰ whether institutionalised or not, offer citizens an opportunity to exercise their rights and being part of governance (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:59). This raises the question why SA citizens have turned towards more extreme (i.e. non-institutionalised) modes to express themselves politically (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:59-60).

To compound matters, the potential pool of citizens wanting to engage through non-institutionalised means when their service needs are not met, is significant and poses a potential threat in the not so distant future (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:59-60). This is alarming, as people out of their own volition deem it necessary to create political spaces for themselves in which to participate (Cornwall, 2002:8). Citizens autonomously claim and create such spaces over and above the fact that there are other spaces to which they are "invited" to participate, e.g. during elections and ward committees (Cornwall, 2002:8). It appears that the institutionalised spaces are deemed ineffective by citizens.

The autonomous actions through which citizens create their own opportunities and their own terms of action (Cornwall, 2002:8) link with Roberts and Hemson's theory that citizens who turn to these "created" spaces of public participation feel that government is working for them (2008:60). Citizens feel that their unsanctioned autonomous actions are making a difference in terms of influencing political decisions and improving conditions (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:60). This group of citizens are less cynical about Government than those citizens who opt for more conventional and institutionalised modes of political participation (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:60). The unwillingness of some citizens to be politically involved in "invited"

¹⁰ Political participation is defined as public involvement in the political processes of a country, including decision and policy making (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:59).

institutional spaces of political participation (Cornwall, 2002:8), and the fact that another significant group of citizens are contemplating exchanging the institutional “invited” spaces for non-institutional “created” spaces (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:60), proves that something is amiss with the “invited” institutionalised spaces of citizen inputs. It also means that the approved methods for citizen inputs in “invited” spaces do not serve their purpose.

As discussed in 2.2.4 of this research document, “negative” public value is produced (i.e. citizens are turning to more drastic options such as demonstrations and protests) when citizen perceptions are incorrectly introduced to the public value stream (Bennington & Moore, 2011:47). In this scenario, the operationalising of public value went wrong. An insufficient or incomplete citizen engagement process robs the public service value system of an important input, i.e. citizen perceptions. As mentioned before, citizen perceptions in turn are crucial for citizen evaluation, which informs service improvement strategies (Dinsdale & Marson., 1999:v).

In the case of negative public value, citizen perceptions ended up not forming part the public service value system (Moore, 2013:120). Citizens are mobilised and activated through participatory processes, but their inputs, which should be a catalyst for improvement and greater public value, somehow dissipates before it can serve its purpose. The end result is that the operationalisation “test”, in terms of the strategic triangle, produces negative results (Bennington & Moore, 2011:5). This hampers the attainment of higher levels of public value such as social justice and the welfare of others Moore (2013:60).

It was deemed worthwhile to investigate some of the systemic hindrances preventing (i) citizen perceptions from entering the public service value system, and (ii) citizens from providing meaningful inputs that has an impact on decision and policy making. This investigation is aimed at shedding some light on the question of why citizens are increasingly turning to non-institutionalised spaces of political participation, which they have autonomously created for themselves.

The tension between the ward committee structure and the scope of the existing development committees at municipal level has been identified as a key factor preventing effective citizen input (Nabe, 2016:iii). The situation is compounded by the addition of IDP committees which are limited to recognised structures only and are not open to the community at large (Nabe, 2016:iii-iv). This leads to the situation where there are various structures through which citizen inputs can be obtained, but insufficient coordination of, and between these structures, causing the opportunity for obtaining citizen perceptions and introducing PME, to be lost (Civicus & PG

Exchange, 2012:2). This also makes it problematic to assign accountability in the event of service failures (Zeithaml et al., 2009:212).

The technocratic nature of key structures and instruments aimed at obtaining citizens' inputs weakens the ability of organisations to understand the needs of the poor (Friedman, 2006:11). This creates a significant barrier to the inclusion of perceptions, especially of marginalised, vulnerable communities.

Challenges relating to the ward committee system also prevent citizen perceptions from being obtained. These challenges include perceived party politics within ward committees that render ward committee members biased and subsequently prevent all citizens from raising and sharing their views and perceptions (Greenberg & Mathoho, 2010:14). Another challenge is presented by ward committee members facing intimidation from experienced, yet morally bankrupt, officials, rendering ward committees less effective in their role as a forum for citizen perceptions and the identification of key issues (Nabe, 2016:iv).

The abovementioned alludes to the fact that most of the public involvement hindrances occur at a micro municipal level. Legislation has provided for citizen inputs to be accommodated in service prioritisation. Public sector organisations have created institutionalised platforms for citizen inputs, but such efforts disappoint at the implementation level. This nullifies all efforts to empower citizens to provide inputs, which explains why citizens experience the need to create their own spaces of political participation.

The question remains how to effectively include citizen perceptions in the public value system, especially in the light of the finding that something is amiss with the "invited" institutionalised spaces. Addressing the above-mentioned systemic hindrances will improve citizen involvement but to ensure that perceptions are included requires more of an effort. In order to ensure that citizens veer away from non-institutionalised ways of political participation, Government should ensure that citizens experience the rewards of their efforts in participation. This means that citizens should feel that their inputs play a role in improving Government processes and services

3.5. CONCLUSION

The extent of citizen inputs in key Government processes has been highlighted in this chapter. It was found that, although formalised means for citizens to provide inputs do exist, (a) citizens opt not to use them; (b) these means become ineffective because of incorrect implementation; and (c) they give rise to “negative” public value. Some of the hindrances of political participation through institutional modes have also been discussed.

An investigation into the case literature regarding citizen perceptions and how such perceptions operate in the SA public value system revealed that citizen participation in this context is ineffective and plagued by systematic hindrances. This diminishes the chances of citizen perception influencing public service quality and the assessment thereof. It also means that there is scope and a demand for a framework aimed at factoring in citizen perceptions and improving public service quality. In chapter 3 an overview and analysis of the extent to which citizen perceptions are taken into account in the SA public value system was provided. The reason for this was to determine the influence of citizen participation and perception on public service processes, and if citizen perceptions have been adequately incorporated in the public service value system. The analysis in chapter 3 also revealed that there are other factors which hinders the effective incorporation of citizen participation in the public service value system.

However, before the design of a service improvement framework can commence, another set of case literature need to be consulted in order to establish the extent to which PME methods (which by nature rely on capturing citizen perceptions regarding service quality) have been performed in the SA public service value system. This would indicate whether the notion of factoring in perceptions would be viable. Investigating the previous application of PME methods in SA public sector could reveal whether PME methods yield useful insights regarding service quality. In chapter 4 of this research, the discussion is focused on the examination of case literature on selected service quality-related case examples. This analysis was performed to investigate the reality of quality assessment in SA Government services and to obtain an understanding of the role of perceptions in public service assessment surveys. An attempt was made to ascertain whether the research results produced by perception (or citizen satisfaction surveys) are similar or different from survey(s) that excluded citizen perceptions (i.e. institutional or organisational feedback surveys).

4. CHAPTER 4: OVERVIEW OF PUBLIC SERVICE QUALITY SURVEYS

4.1. INTRODUCTION

In the literature review, the focus was mainly on examining the core theoretical elements of the conceptual framework of this research, i.e. public services; public service quality assessment; citizen evaluation and communication. Chapter 3 contributed to the discussion by investigating the extent to which perceptions are incorporated in the public service value system, in selected case literature examples. In the process, systemic hinderances preventing perceptions from effectively entering and being part of the public service value system, was also examined.

This chapter extends the analysis in chapter 3 to include an investigation of the difference in the results yielded by service delivery survey(s) which included citizen perceptions and those that have excluded citizen perceptions. The rationale for the investigation in this chapter, was to ascertain the role of perception-based surveys (i.e. citizen satisfaction / community- / communication audits) and determine whether their results are able to provide a different perspective to the information obtained by institutional feedback surveys. The ultimate goal is to provide public sector decision makers with a holistic view of public service quality and enabling them to make more informed decisions.

The next part of the analysis, will be investigating the distinctive natures of the abovementioned perception-based and institutional feedback surveys and introduce the selected case examples.

4.2. PERCEPTION-BASED AND INSTITUTIONAL FEEDBACK SURVEYS

The particular case literature for this chapter was selected to include South African public service assessment surveys. The case literature consists of the Munidex survey, which serves as the institutional feedback survey example, for the purposes of this research. The Munidex survey measured the service performance of all levels of SA Local Government on actual delivery and improvements over time (Hawes & Mohamed, 2009:1-24).

The next case example involves a stakeholder survey (Pekkonen, 2012:1-5) on perceived municipal performance based on the adherence to the Batho Pele (or “people first”) principles (Roberts & Hemson, 2008: 53-61). This stakeholder survey was based on the findings of the

South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) and consists of a systemic public assessment of the degree to which the principles have been implemented by municipalities country wide (Roberts & Hemson, 2008: 53-61).

The SASAS survey investigated how citizens perceive municipal performance by using of the Batho Pele service principles to compile positive statements to which citizens indicated their agreement or disagreement to (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54). The survey closely resembles the SERVQUAL service assessment model (as previously discussed in 2.3.4 of this research) which is aimed at capturing service perceptions and expectations. The SERVQUAL model uses five service quality dimensions which are similar to the Batho Pele principles, to develop items to which participants are required to respond according to a seven-point scale (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:422). The SASAS survey can be interpreted as the SERVQUAL of the public sector.

The final case example includes a consultative citizens' report card survey of the City of Tshwane (Roefs et al., 2006:1-57), which utilised a participatory monitoring and evaluation technique, i.e. the citizens report card (Pekkonen, 2012:1-5). Usually, perception occurrence is low in citizens report card surveys as this survey type is focussed on soliciting service quality feedback which generally excludes opinions (Pekkonen, 2012:1-5). The perception occurrence scale for PME methods demonstrates this statement in Diagram 2-16 of this research. The Tshwane case example however, presented citizen perceptions (and opinions) alongside public sector service performance feedback data (Roefs et al., 2006:29, 31, 36, 40), and even included a section specifically devoted to perceptions of the municipality (Roefs et al., 2006:53). The case example combined credible, scientifically analysed and quantified knowledge with citizen perceptions and expectations and provided a unique perspective on service quality assessment.

The key findings of the survey which exclude citizen perception (i.e. the Munidex survey survey), were compared with the main findings of the surveys which included citizen perceptions (i.e. the Tshwane and SASAS surveys), with the aim to establish whether the inclusion of citizens' perceptions in the assessment of public services, will provide an improved quality output. These findings of all three surveys are related to a selection of basic services, namely housing, water, electricity, sanitation and waste removal.

What is also noteworthy, is that all the selected case examples measured service quality at municipal level. This is understandable as municipalities and Local Government, as mentioned before, operate at the level of Government which are nearest to citizens and communities.

The next part of the analyses will concentrate on the abovementioned case literature and analyse them in greater detail. Attention will first be paid to the institutional survey, in order to establish a basis of recorded national service performance measures based on tangible service delivery results but excluding citizens' perceptions.

4.2.1. Case example: Munidex Survey

The Munidex was compiled using data sourced from Statistics SA (Hawes & Mohamed, 2009:1). It compared the results of the Community Survey 2007 with Census 2001, focusing on measuring the performance of municipalities, district councils, metropolitan municipalities and provinces according to their actual delivery, as well as improvements in delivery over a period of time (Hawes & Mohamed, 2009:1). The actual delivery results are reflected by the Munidex status indexes, whilst the results of the delivery improvements are reflected by the improvement indexes which allow for the recognition of previously disadvantaged municipalities that have achieved improvement over the assessment period (Hawes & Mohamed, 2009:1).

All municipalities at all the three municipal levels were assessed during this survey, and five basic services categories (or elements of service delivery as the survey refers to them) were applied. These categories included housing, water, electricity, waste removal and sanitation (Hawes & Mahomed, 2009:3). Table 4-9 reveals the five elements of service delivery as applied by the Munidex status indexes and also includes the national average score of all the provinces and municipalities in South Africa combined, in respect of each of these elements.

Table 4-9: Munidex scoring in terms of the basic elements of service

| Basic services (elements of service delivery) | National average score |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Formal dwellings (i.e. housing) | 67,80% |
| Piped water | 69,50% |
| Formal toilets (i.e. sanitation) | 68,60% |
| Waste removal | 61,60% |
| Electricity (lighting; cooking & heating) | 68,4 % (80.10% + 66.40% +58.70%) |

Source: Adapted from Hawes & Mahomed (2009:3)

The significance of the data provided by Table 4-9 is that it depicts how the country has performed in terms of the fundamental key performance areas for public service delivery (i.e. basic services) (Hawes & Mohamed, 2009:3). However, because performance in this instance

was measured nationally, it presents a very general picture. Table 4-10 indicates the overall final score of each province across all basic services (or elements of service delivery), taking into account the effects of urbanisation and the additional strain that it has placed on municipalities country wide (Hawes & Mohamed, 2009:1). This narrows down performance evaluation to reflect provincial as opposed to national performance (as seen in Table 4-9).

Table 4-10: Ranking of provincial service delivery performance

| Province | Scoring Status Index (%) (Munindex)) | Ranking Status Index (Munindex) | Scoring Batho Pele Index (0-100) (HSRC survey) | Ranking Batho Pele Index (HSRC survey) | Scoring Improvement Index (%) (Munindex) | Ranking Improvement Index (%) (Munindex) |
|---------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| Gauteng | 83.10 | 1 | 57.4 | 1 | 47.40 | 9 |
| Western Cape | 82.60 | 2 | 51.7 | 3 | 48.40 | 8 |
| Northern Cape | 78.10 | 3 | 44.5 | 9 | 50.80 | 2 |
| Free State | 78.40 | 4 | 55.8 | 2 | 52.30 | 1 |
| Mpumalanga | 60.70 | 5 | 49 | 6 | 50.0 | 4 |
| North West | 62.20 | 6 | 50 | 5 | 50.5 | 3 |
| Kwazulu-Natal | 61.40 | 7 | 50.4 | 4 | 49.50 | 5 |
| Eastern Cape | 50.60 | 8 | 47.3 | 8 | 49.20 | 7 |
| Limpopo | 46.80 | 9 | 48.2 | 7 | 49.40 | 6 |

Sources: Hawes & Mohamed (2009:23); Roberts and Hemson (2008:55)

Table 4-10 compares the current proportion of citizens who have access to basic services through the use of a status index and the percentage change in citizens obtaining access to basic services in each province, through the improvement indexes respectively (Hawes & Mohamed, 2009:1, 23). It is noticeable that both the Munindex and the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) survey where perceptions were included, rated or ranked Gauteng in the top position – according to the Munindex status index, Gauteng is rated as number 1 at 83% on the status index (Hawes & Mohamed, 2009:23) and according to the HSRC survey Gauteng scores 57.4, which is the highest rating according to the HSRC scale (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:53-55).

What is also curious is the difference in the scored amounts – the institutional feedback survey scores the province at a much higher level than the perception-based survey, given the fact that different measuring instruments were applied during the respective researches. This could be interpreted as an indication of the underlying dissatisfaction with public services when

citizens are afforded the opportunity to part-take in the assessment thereof. In this scenario there are two types of measurements - one measuring the service sector (i.e. the public sector) and its service performance, and the other measuring the perception thereof. This implies that two different, but related matters were being investigated. Secondly, the measurements indicate two significantly varying score levels which could mean that the citizens' evaluation of the services measured them to be of a mediocre quality, whilst such services are actually of an acceptable standard on an objective (institutional feedback) level. There therefore is a disconnect between what is actually offered to the citizen in the form of public services, and what citizens' perceptions of the offered services are.

The Western Cape is placed in the third position in the HSRC survey (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:55) and takes the second position on the status index (Hawes & Mohamed 2009:23), signifying that the province performs better than citizens perceive it to be. The province is able to deliver basic services, but citizens experience the province as not meeting their needs, indicating a communication or consultation challenge. The same observation can be made in the instances of Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape provinces.

The opposite is true for the Free State which, in reality, performs worse than people perceive it to perform. The Free State occupies third position according to the status index (Hawes & Mohamed, 2009:23), but takes the second position according to the Batho Pele Index of the SASAS survey (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:55).

The ratings of the Western Cape and the Free State have significant ramifications for citizen satisfaction – irrespective of how well the Western Cape performs, based on key performance areas as determined by institutional feedback surveys and mechanisms, the citizens' perception of the province is that it does not perform at a level that meets their expectations and gains their confidence.

The next part of the analyses will focus on investigating the core findings of the citizen report card survey of the metropolitan municipality, the City of Tshwane. This survey, presents micro-level, in-depth insights regarding public service feedback. The importance of this case example and the reason for including it in the research was that it provides a documented example of a citizen report card (CRC) in South Africa.

4.2.2. Case example: Consultative Citizens' Report Card (CCRC) Survey - City of Tshwane

In 2006 the World Bank commissioned the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) to conduct a pilot study of the Consultative Citizen Report Card (CCRC) survey in the City of Tshwane (Roefs et al., 2006:1). The Report Card method gathered citizens' inputs on key public services and key performance areas which municipalities are mandated to deliver, such as water, sanitation, waste disposal, electricity, transport and housing (Roefs et al., 2006:7). These inputs from citizens reflect the quality and other service attributes that provide satisfaction to its users (Roefs et al., 2006:8). In 2012, a second pilot study was undertaken in the OR Tambo District Municipality in the Eastern Cape (Zama, 2012:3).

Citizen report cards are applied as tools to engage citizens (through participatory surveys) and strive to determine user feedback regarding the quality of public service and performance by public sector service providers, in order to raise citizen awareness (Pekkonen, 2012:1). The key feature of CRCs is that survey findings are placed in public domain (Pekkonen, 2012:1, 4), which enhances accountability and transparency.

This survey was aimed at strengthening municipal-citizen (client) accountability by requesting residents to indicate their views and experiences of services and provide feedback regarding these public perceptions, in this manner providing feedback to the municipality, as discussed in Figure1-4 of this research, with reference to the Communication Process Model. The model illustrates how interaction between Local Government and citizens should ideally operate.

The Tshwane and OR Tambo case examples included a wide range of users, directly and indirectly, for inputs (Pekkonen, 2012a:2-3). The biggest disadvantage of the citizen's report card method of surveying is that it needs to be applied over a prolonged period to assist in creating benchmarks and trends over a longer period, which implicates that the process must be repeated regularly, rendering it costly and time consuming due to its long-term commitment (Civicus & PG Exchange, 2012:2).

The next part of the analysis will present the other perception-based survey, which was a stakeholder survey (Sadashiva, 2012:2-5). Stakeholder surveys typically include all parties who are affected by a service provider and its activities and are questionnaire-based quantitative tools for gathering information (Civicus & PG Exchange 2012:2).

4.2.3. Case example: Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) and the South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) – Perceived municipal performance and political behaviour

The South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) study utilised the stakeholder survey technique and was aimed at exploring citizen attitudes in relation to municipal accountability and the provision of household or public services in terms of the Batho Pele value-based principles (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:53). Stakeholder surveys are usually applied to obtain a better understanding of the perceptions, attitudes, experiences, knowledge and interests of internal and external stakeholders to make service delivery process improvements and in essence comprise a quantitative questionnaire-based tool to measure a sampled population (Sadashiva, 2012:2-5). The perception occurrence in this survey type is relatively high, as demonstrated by the perception occurrence scale for PMS methods (also see Diagram 2-16 of this research).

The importance of Roberts and Hemson's research (2008:53) resides in the fact that it explores citizen attitudes related to the extent to which municipalities adhere to the Batho Pele principles when providing and distributing services. These attitudes are useful for the purposes of the current research study, as it illustrates the kind of results that a perception-based survey yield and can be compared to the results of institutional feedback research.

The 'Batho Pele' or 'people first' principles were adopted in 1997 as a framework to establish a new public service delivery ethic aligned with the nation's constitutional ideals promoting efficient, economic and effective use of public resources in a manner that is development-oriented and responsive to peoples' needs (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:53). During service delivery protests, issues relating to consultation (especially during the planning phase), service quality and responsiveness regarding service complaints are often highlighted (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:53). The Batho Pele principles provide the basis for an initial assessment of government practice and can also be regarded as a basic code for the assessment of the implementation of democratic, informational and competency principles of all spheres of Government (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:53).

As previously mentioned, the data used in Roberts and Hemson's article (2008:53) derive from the 2007 round of the South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS), a nationally representative sample survey of adults aged 16 years and older that was conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC). The SASAS of 2007 gathered information on

public attitudes, beliefs, values and behavioural patterns. Attitudes towards the performance of municipalities against the Batho Pele principles were included for the first time in the 2007 survey. In accordance with the eight service delivery principles, a set of nine attitudinal statements which were drafted to facilitate a systematic public assessment of the degree to which these principles were implemented by municipalities when it related to household public service provision (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:53). These attitudinal statements are discussed in Table 1-2 of this research.

Participants in the HSRC survey were required to respond to positive statements about services related to the eight Batho Pele principles. As previously mentioned, the BPI that was developed constituted a summated scale of responses to the Batho Pele value-based statements (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54). The BPI contains eight aspects or features based on the Batho Pele principles, and eight positive corresponding SASAS statements relating to the afore mentioned features or aspects, and the scoring was performed according to citizens' agreement with the afore mentioned positive statements (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54). The BPI relates to a range of values from nought (0) to one hundred (100) where "0" means the lowest and "100" represents the maximum possible municipal performance (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54). This implies that the higher the scoring, the higher the satisfaction level with the particular service.

In the following section, a comparison of the results of the three abovementioned case examples will be presented.

4.3. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

A comparison of the research results of the three selected case examples would provide a fair idea of the difference (or similarity) in the results yielded by the perception-based surveys and the institutional feedback survey. It would also indicate whether these results complement each other, presenting a synergy between “hard” and “soft” performance measures, as discussed in 2.3.2 of this research, where the classification of service assessment was addressed.

The comparison was performed according to common themes within the selected case examples. The common themes include (i) the relationship between perceived service levels and satisfaction, (ii) the impact of geographic variance, with specific regard to communities in rural areas, (iii) access to basic services and consulting citizens and (iv) socio-economic disparities and perceptions regarding public sector service performance.

4.3.1. Relationship between perceived service levels and satisfaction

When assessing the quality standards of public service delivery (namely consultation, service standards, access, courtesy, information, transparency, redress and value) by using the eight Batho Pele principles, the survey results indicated that the highest level of disagreement with the positive statement(s) related to the aspect of “consultation” of the BPI (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:55). The lowest levels of disagreement with Batho Pele statements involved the “setting service standards” and the “increasing access” aspects of the BPI, which scored 46% and 44% respectively, as seen in the statistics presented by Diagram 4-22 (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:55). The level of agreement with statements about Batho Pele is generally low, ranging from 19% for Consultation to 44% for Increasing Access (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:55).

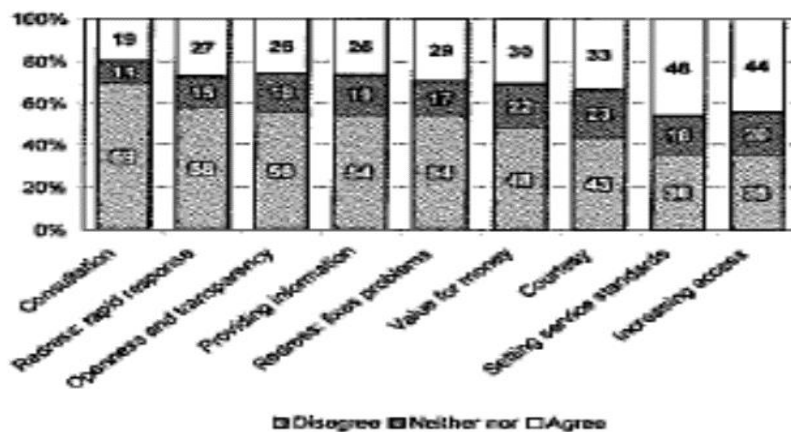


Diagram 4-22: Levels of agreement with the Batho Pele statements

Source: Roberts and Hemson (2008:55)

The statistics presented above illustrates the BPI results for municipal performance according to adherence to the Batho Pele principles (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:55). The BPI measured the level of citizens' agreement with the SASAS statements (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:55). It was found that no single aspect received a positive rating by more than half of the adult population (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:55), which reiterates the overall low level of statement agreement and also (based on the statements) highlights the general low levels of municipal performance as perceived by the population.

The general low levels of agreement with the BPI statements, are in stark contrast with the measured levels of public sector service performance achieved by the Muidex service delivery index which appear to be considerably higher than the perception survey results of the SASAS, as discussed above. The overall final scores of the provinces varied between a high score of 68.5 scored by the Western Cape Province, and the lowest score amounted to 46.9 for the Limpopo province (Hawes & Mohamed, 2009:23).

Both surveys measured service delivery quality at national and provincial level at a particular time (i.e. 2008/2009). However, the results produced by the SASAS not only revealed how the adult population perceive service delivery, but also specific dimensions or standards of service quality as related to the Batho Pele statements (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:55). These survey results indicated what areas of service quality should be prioritised and given immediate attention, e.g. through consultation where the agreement with the Batho Pele statement was very low (i.e. 19%) (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:55).

The results produced by the Munidex survey, on the other hand, presented service delivery quality; benchmarked the results against similar organisations (i.e. comparing the results from various provinces, cities, district and local municipalities); and measured whether there had been improvement in performance or not through the use of total improvement indexes which were based on the percentage change of households with access to particular services (Hawes & Mohamed, 2009:1, 6, 23). The two surveys produced different outcomes on the same matters and each presented a different perspective. Both sets of perspectives are crucial to obtain a comprehensive view of service delivery performance, however, the strategic information that is required to inform decision makers in terms of strategic planning, is found in the SASAS perception-based survey.

According to Dinsdale and Marson (1999:18), a disadvantage of indexes is that they are limited with regard to their ability to guide service improvement initiatives and do not inform decision makers about key aspects such as how customers rate the importance of particular services or their priorities in improvement and development.¹¹ On the other hand, perception-based surveys such as the SASAS survey (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54), explore the relationship between the ratings and the household or personal characteristics of the respondents, which inevitably leads to a different perspective on the same research topic. Perception-based surveys are therefore able to contribute more meaningful insights to discussions regarding service improvement.

There is a positive link between perceived municipal performance and citizens' satisfaction ratings of municipal service performance, e.g. the lower the level of access to a service, the higher the dissatisfaction level with that specific service (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:55-56). The satisfaction rating with such service will be lower, and the agreement with the Batho Pele statements will be less (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:55-56). This tendency was also found in the Tshwane case example when the satisfaction with basic services were measured. In measuring citizen service satisfaction with sanitation in the City of Tshwane, it was found that citizens in rural formal areas (68%) were substantially less "satisfied" with sanitation, followed by urban informal residents (26%) and tribal area citizens (11%) (Roefs et al., 2006:36).

¹¹ The community survey (2016:56-57) by Statistics SA is another example of an index commenting on perceptions of municipalities as public service centres. The community survey merely highlighted the public service issues as perceived by communities across all the provinces (Statistics SA, 2016:56-57). It provided a clear picture of the reasons for dissatisfaction but did not indicate satisfaction levels (Statistics SA, 2016:56-57). It can therefore not be compared to the results of the Munidex survey or the Tshwane survey.

The following table presents a summary of the findings related to the respondents' satisfaction with sanitation options available to them within the assigned geographic locations of the Tshwane research (Roefs et al., 2006:36).

Table 4-11: Satisfaction with Sanitation by geographic area

| SATISFACTION LEVEL | Urban Formal | Urban Informal | Tribal | Rural Formal | Total |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|----------------|--------|--------------|-------|
| Satisfied | 85,0% | 26,2% | 11,4% | 68,3% | 71,1% |
| Neither satisfied or dissatisfied | 3,9% | 13,7% | 0,8% | 4,9% | 5,3% |
| Dissatisfied | 11,1% | 60,1% | 87,8% | 26,8% | 23,7% |
| Total | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

Source: Roefs et al. (2006: 36).

In contrast, citizens in formal urban areas indicated an 85% satisfaction result for sanitation, which reveals the disparity in the perceptions of citizens from formal urban areas and citizens from all the other locations or geographic areas (Roefs et al., 2006: 36). Table 4-11 indicates that citizens in tribal and urban informal areas registered the highest results with regard to dissatisfaction, namely 87% and 60% respectively. This reiterates the previous observation that there is a definite correspondence between limited access to services and service satisfaction.

The overarching message is that Local Government is improving delivery but is failing to communicate with citizens and to respond to people's priorities (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54). In this study, it was found that access to basic services does not translate into satisfaction with these services (Roefs et al., 2006:2), which indicates that something went wrong in between the processes of "improving" services and satisfaction with "improved" services – the consultation process with the end-user or citizen might not have been facilitated properly, leaving the citizen's actual need still unmet.

4.3.2. Geographic variance - the plight of communities in rural areas

As far as the type of location where participants in the SASAS survey were living is concerned, the average BPI score during the survey, and therefore the extent to which participants were in agreement with the Batho Pele statements, was highest in formal urban areas (56,5)¹² followed by informal settlements (49,5); communal rural areas (45,4); and commercial farmworker households (33,7). When formal urban areas were subdivided into metropolitan municipalities and small towns, it was found that residents in metropolitan municipalities obtained a BPI score of 58,4 compared to 53,1 in small towns (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:55-56). This means that citizens in rural areas disagreed with the Batho Pele statements and perceived that government and municipalities did not implement these statements as they ought to and were failing to meet the service delivery needs of SA citizens living in rural areas. An example of this is the situation of farmworker households and the fact that it was amongst this particular grouping that the lowest BPI scores were found, which raised questions about the living standards of those farmworkers who continue to live on farms (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:55-56).

The Munidex case example found that the 10 worst performing municipalities nationally were in the rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal with scores varying from 33.33 for Engolden municipality to 26.42 for the Vulamehlo municipality (Hawes & Mahomed, 2009:4). This research also found a large gap in terms of service delivery between the urban and rural municipalities, particularly in the former homelands of in the Eastern Cape, North West, and Limpopo provinces (Hawes & Mahomed, 2009:2). This is in stark contrast with the best performing municipalities where the highest score reached 92.48 for the Nama Khoi municipality. These results strengthen the notion that service delivery in rural areas in particular, appears to be lacking.¹³

The above-mentioned occurrence was repeated in the case of formal rural citizens in the Tshwane consultative citizens' report card case example when access to household services was measured. The survey revealed that some mere 0,6% of citizens in Tshwane who were housed in formal urban areas, did not have access to piped water, as opposed to, more than

¹² All BPI scores are awarded according to a scale varying from zero to one hundred (0-100), unless otherwise indicated (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:55-56).

¹³ This tendency was also noticeable in the community survey, which indicated that the provinces of the Western Cape and Gauteng did not experience challenges relating to safe and reliable water (Statistics SA, 2016:57). In all the other provinces, safe and reliable water was an issue, particularly in the more rural provinces of Limpopo, North West and Mpumalanga (Statistics SA, 2016:57).

half in formal rural areas (i.e. 53%) (Roefs et al., 2006: 21) – formal rural areas are dominated by large-scale commercial agriculture or animal husbandry, but may also include other rural parts of the country such as small villages and mission stations (Roefs et al., 2006: 18). Interestingly, the citizens in the formal rural areas had even less access to piped water than those in the tribal areas (i.e. areas which were administered by tribal rulers under the previous regime), which scored 87% (Roefs et al., 2006:18, 21). The Munidex findings confirmed this trend and similarly reported generally low service performance levels in the former homelands areas (i.e. tribal and formal rural areas) across the country (Hawes & Mahomed, 2009:2). Table 4-12 depicts the results of access to water according to the above-mentioned areas, as established by the survey in Tshwane (Roefs et al., 2006:21).

Table 4-12: Source of water by geographic area

| SOURCE OF WATER | Urban formal | Urban informal | Tribal | Rural formal | Total |
|-----------------|--------------|----------------|--------|--------------|-------|
| Piped water | 99,4 % | 93,8% | 87,3% | 46,9% | 96,0% |
| Un-piped water | 0,6 % | 6,2% | 12,7% | 53,1% | 4,0% |
| Total | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

Source: Roefs et al. (2006: 21)

The findings for access to piped water in the Munidex survey indicated that residents in rural areas generally tend to have the least access to water services, with Msinga municipality in KwaZulu-Natal scoring 2.2 for households with piped water in the dwelling or yard (Hawes & Mahomed, 2009:9), which contrasts starkly with the national statistic of 69.5, as mentioned earlier (Hawes & Mahomed, 2009:2). Msinga was the local municipality with the weakest service delivery and also the poorest municipality in the country. It is isolated from surrounding municipalities and 99 %of the municipality is rural comprising of six Traditional Authority (tribal) areas (Hawes & Mahomed, 2009:6), which supports the notion that rural areas tend to have the least access to basic municipal services. However, Gamagara municipality, which is also situated in a rural area, disproved this notion and achieved a score of 98.2 (Hawes & Mahomed, 2009:9)

The need for subdividing statistics into geographic social groupings (e.g. formal rural, tribal, formal and informal urban areas) was demonstrated by the results from Ga-Segonyana and Gamagara municipality in the Northern Cape Province. The former scored 3.9 in the access to piped water category (Hawes & Mahomed, 2009:9) The findings were not specific and did not indicate geographic social groupings, which is crucial, as compared to Ga-Segonyana municipality, Gamagara municipality achieved a score of 98.2 whilst both these local

municipalities fall within the same area namely the Kgalagadi district (Hawes & Mahomed, 2009:9).

Similar to the situation of commercial farm workers mentioned earlier, citizens in tribal areas, formal rural areas and urban informal areas are often neglected during the process of service delivery. This was reiterated by the high levels of dissatisfaction with sanitation services in tribal areas (87%) and urban informal areas (60%) (Roefs et al., 2006: 36), which also happens to be the two geographical groupings with the highest level of usage of unimproved toilet facilities (i.e. any toilet that is not a flush toilet connected to a municipal sewage system, e.g. a bucket or chemical toilet or a pit latrine) – 69% for urban informal and 54% for tribal areas (Roefs et al., 2006:34). Ironically, sanitation needs in formal rural areas were quite well serviced and indicated a comparatively high level of satisfaction with sanitation services which amounted to 68% (Roefs et al., 2006:36).

4.3.3. Access to basic services: consulting citizens

The SASAS perception-based survey found a clear relationship between the level of service received and expressed evaluations of municipal performance (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:56), meaning that the residents with the least access to a basic service would rate the municipality lower because of the lack of service provision. With regard to water, the BPI scoring indicated little variance in the scorings for piped water in the dwelling (56.4) and piped water on site (56.3) (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:56).

The distinguishing variance was between piped water onsite as a main source of water (56.3) and the main source of drinking water from a public or communal tap (44.7) (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:56). Those receiving water below RDP standards also expressed significantly less agreement with the Batho Pele statements and indirectly expressed discontent about the provision of piped water. A similar trend was distinguishable in terms of sanitation where those with an unimproved toilet or no toilet at all showed significantly more discontent with municipal performance than those who have access to either a pit latrine or a flush toilet (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:56). Table 4-13 shows the results for BPI scores by access to household services (2007) with specific reference to water and sanitation (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:56).

Table 4-13: Batho Pele Mean scores according to access to basic household services

| Basic service | Index Score (0-100) |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Main Source of drinking water | |
| Piped water in dwelling | 56.4 |
| Piped water on site | 56.3 |
| Public or communal tap | 44.7 |
| Below RDP standards | 40.1 |
| Type of Toilet | |
| Flush toilet | 44.7 |
| Pit latrine with ventilation pipe | 44.7 |
| Pit latrine without ventilation pipe | 40.6 |

Source: Roberts and Hemson (2008:56)

However, the perception-based study highlighted a subtle observation that had not been researched in the Tshwane study, namely that the ratings for citizens with piped water in their

dwelling and those with tap water on site or in their yard essentially were the same¹⁴ (both scoring around 56), as reflected in Table 4.5 (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:56). As already mentioned, the main difference in the water services ratings lies between the citizens with limited access to water (i.e. communal tap or below RDP level water service) and those with access to water, whether in the dwelling, on site or in the yard. This could indicate that citizens, as long as they have “reasonable access” (i.e. in this scenario, on site or in the yard, and they do not have to go too far to fetch water) are content with such service because it addresses their most basic requirements in terms of water services and access thereto.¹⁵

The findings in terms of refuse removal provided a curious perspective in the sense that some residents receiving inadequate services did not complain about the situation. Only the formal urban grouping is adequately provided for in terms of refuse removal - 89% of residents in urban formal areas (i.e. an area in which most of the dwellings are usually brick structures) have access to refuse removal by the municipality usually once a week, which stands in stark contrast with the mere 39% of citizens in formal rural areas and 35,8 % of citizens in informal urban areas who received the same service (Roefs et al., 2006:18;31). In tribal areas, even less citizens (i.e. 4%) received refuse removal services (Roefs et al., 2006:31). This means that the majority of citizens in the City of Tshwane do not have access to refuse removal services. Table 4-14 illustrates the various methods by which refuse is removed, according to the various geographic groupings (Roefs et al., 2006:31).

Table 4-14:Method of refuse removal by geographic area

| METHOD OF REFUSE REMOVAL | Urban Formal | Urban Informal | Tribal | Rural Formal | Total |
|--|--------------|----------------|--------|--------------|-------|
| Removed by municipality at least once a week | 89,9% | 35,8% | 4,5% | 39,3% | 74,6% |

¹⁴ The community survey and census results indicate that the provision of water for households in their yards has nearly doubled since 1996 whilst the provision of water in the various dwellings has remained essentially the same (Statistics SA, 2016:65). Interestingly, the majority of citizens perceive that Government’s performance in terms of water provision are the same for both areas (i.e. in the dwelling and in the yard) whilst the performance for water provision in the yards in reality was much better than citizens’ general perceptions thereof.

¹⁵ The majority of SA citizens perceive Government performance in terms of water provision in the dwelling or in the yard as the same (Roberts and Hemson, 2008:56), even though the provision of piped water in citizens’ yards has outperformed that of water in their households (Statistics SA, 2016:65). This tendency proves that citizens’ priority for water services lies with the “reasonable accessibility” thereof, i.e. piped water in the yard.

| | | | | | |
|--|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Removed by municipality less often | 4,1% | 1,7% | | | 3,3% |
| Removed by community members at least once a week | 0.1% | | | | 0% |
| Removed by community members less often than once a week | | 3,9% | | | 0,6% |
| Communal refuse dump | | 9,5% | 3,8% | | 1,7% |
| Own refuse dump or burn | 2,7% | 21,6% | 88,4% | 46,7% | 12,1% |
| No rubbish disposal | 2,4% | 27,5% | 1,9% | 9,1% | 6,6% |
| Other | 1,0% | | 1,4% | 4,9% | 1,0% |
| Total | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

Source: Roefs et al. (2006:31)

When the research enquired about complaints regarding refuse removal, only 7.5% of rural participants in formal areas and 6.7% of participants in informal urban areas complained about the state of this service. Among participants in the tribal area who also receive a very low level of this service 20% complained. The level of complaints was relatively low compared to the low levels of access to the service, which somewhat questions Roberts & Hemson's previous finding that there was a clear relationship between the level of service received and expressed evaluations of municipal performance (2008:56).

One possible explanation could be that the alternative method of "own refuse dump or burn" (Roefs et al., 2006:31) works well for residents and could in future be employed as a service alternative for these residents. This is similar to the aforementioned example concerning piped water that revealed that as long as citizens have reasonable access to a specific household service, they are content because it addresses their most basic needs (Roefs et al., 2006:29). Finding alternative ways of delivering the service to residents is a possible option which could be employed to address the public sector services dilemma in SA.

Other findings in the case example of the City of Tshwane revealed the opposite, namely that residents tend to be dissatisfied even when they have a high level of access to a service. The dissatisfaction levels with water as a service were highest among tribal area residents (58%) (Roefs et al., 2006:29), whilst 87% of tribal residents had access to piped water - only 12% of residents in the tribal area make use of un-piped water in Tshwane (Roefs et al., 2006:21). This stands in stark contrast with rural formal areas where 53% of the residents have no choice but to rely on un-piped water; implying that tribal residents who have greater access to piped water (which was measured at 87% [Roefs et al., 2006:21] as mentioned previously) is more dissatisfied with the water service than rural formal residents who have less access to piped water (46% of rural formal residents) (Roefs et al., 2006: 21).

Table 4-15 indicates the results for citizen satisfaction with water services in the City of Tshwane according to the various geographical areas of the survey (Roefs et al., 2006:29).

Table 4-15: Satisfaction with water supply in geographical area

| LEVEL OF SATISFACTION | Urban formal | Urban informal | Tribal | Rural formal | Total |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|----------------|--------|--------------|-------|
| Satisfied | 74,8% | 56,8% | 36,6% | 56,2% | 69,1% |
| Neither satisfied or dissatisfied | 8,2% | 8,3% | 4,9% | 6,9% | 8,0% |
| Dissatisfied | 17,0% | 34,9% | 58,5% | 36,8% | 22,9% |
| Total | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

Source: Roefs et al. (2006:29)

In the case example conducted by Roberts and Hemson it was found that, as far as sanitation services were concerned, the groupings with access to unimproved toilets only (i.e. pit latrines with or without ventilation pipes) and those with no sanitation services whatsoever, showed relatively more discontent with municipal sanitation services than those citizens who had a flush toilet (2008:56). The difference in ratings between those with a flush toilet (56.6) and those with no toilets or unimproved toilets (40.6) was noteworthy and amounted to a difference of 16 (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:56), which (if compared with the difference between those with a flush toilet and those who have to rely on a pit latrine without a ventilation pipe) is still significant and amounts to 11.9 (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:56). Furthermore, the difference in ratings between those citizens with a flush toilet and those with access to a pit latrine with a ventilation pipe amounted to 8.9, which remains substantial (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:56). Please note that in the calculation of these differences, the researcher has compared all the other sanitation options with the ideal sanitation situation or option, which is to have access to a flush toilet. The fact that all these differences are relatively substantial, indicates that the second, third and fourth options for sanitation are not appreciated by the recipients and therefore do not constitute a viable option.

Unlike with the water services where citizens, as long as they have adequate access (i.e. in the dwelling) or reasonable access (i.e. on site or in the yard) to water services, are content with such service; it appears that there is no reasonable alternative for sanitation services. With sanitation services the difference in scoring is marginal (as with water services) (Roefs et al., 2006:21). The Tshwane survey grouped access to flush toilets together with access to a pit latrine (with ventilation) to form a category called “improved” toilets (Roefs et al., 2006:34) where access to flush toilets was scored at 56.6, whilst access to pit latrines (with ventilation

pipes) was rated at 47.7. (This is contrary to the findings of the SASAS survey where citizens indicated that a ventilation pit latrine system is not desirable). It can be deducted that there is a significant difference between the ratings (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:56), showing that the two options were very different for the users.

The perception-based survey (i.e. the SASAS survey) was able to highlight a “finer nuance” (i.e. that citizens experience a subtle difference between the various sanitation options). The perception-based survey is specifically aimed at extracting aspects such as citizen service expectations, their principles and values, and their characteristics which constitutes the concept of perception (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:11), and which might have influenced citizens’ perspective of sanitation options. The “finer nuance” relates to perception, which is not reflected by institutional feedback survey results.

Table 4-16 below captures the statistics for “improved” toilets available to households according to designated geographic areas, as defined by the Tshwane survey (Roefs et al., 2006:34).

Table 4-16: “Improved” toilets available to household by geographic area

| | Urban formal | Urban informal | Tribal | Rural formal | Total |
|-------------------|--------------|----------------|--------|--------------|-------|
| Improved toilet | 93,6% | 30,4% | 45,6% | 74,9% | 80,2% |
| Unimproved toilet | 6,4% | 69,6% | 54,4% | 25,1% | 19,8% |
| Total | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

Source: Roefs et al. (2006:34)

The above-mentioned finding reveals that service preference is also revealed through measuring citizens’ perception(s) of a service, which empowers the service provider with useful information which could be applied to improve service delivery performance. For example, the fact that citizens indirectly indicated that there is no real second option for sanitation could show municipalities that sanitation should be a priority in the area, and that more funding should be allocated to sanitation preferred by citizens, i.e. flush toilets. At the same time, citizens’ perceptions on water as a service above (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:56) could mean that that a second option to the ideal is acceptable to citizens, as in the case of piped water on site or in a yard as opposed to the ideal or first option of piped tap water in a dwelling.

In the previous discussion on service quality assessment criteria (refer to Table 2-8 of this research), understanding the customer/ user was highlighted as a quality criterium (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:421). Understanding the customer means that an effort is made to know the customers' and their needs. Government may need to save on water service expenses by providing more second-option water services to fund the additional expense of flush toilets in the service area of sanitation. By listening to citizens and prioritising according to citizens' feedback, Government would be able to respond more effectively to the needs of its citizens as required in section 73, subsection 4(2) of the Municipal Systems Act (Republic of South Africa, 2000).

In the OR Tambo case example, it was found that citizens themselves were not communicating their service concerns to municipalities and failed to engage municipalities even when they were dissatisfied with services (Zama, 2012:4). In terms of water delivery in OR Tambo, the data indicated 60,2% overall dissatisfaction with water supply, although only 35% of participants complained about water services in the past year (Zama, 2012:4). In this instance, failure to understand the customer is due to the customer's own lack of communication. Citizens do need to realise that for Government to be able to respond their needs, they need to verbalise such needs. However, focus group discussions in the OR Tambo case example revealed an interesting dynamic in terms of listening to customers – participants disclosed they have lost trust in Government's ability to facilitate public participation (Zama, 2012:4). Participants were of the opinion that public participation mechanisms (specifically imbizo's) failed to address all the issues that were raised (Zama, 2012:4).

Based on perceptions examined up to this stage, it seems critical for Government to devise a strategy around sanitation to respond to the citizen feedback information which they receive. As mentioned previously, citizens' perceptions contain crucial input information for decision makers which may assist in the development of improvement strategies aimed at addressing the gap between what citizens receive and what they believe they are entitled to receive (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:3).

The Tshwane case example (Roefs et al., 2006:33) found that 92.3% of residents in formal urban areas have access to what is considered the ideal service option in terms of sanitation (i.e. a flush toilet which is connected to a municipal system). In informal urban areas this statistic drops to 15% and to 0% where tribal areas are concerned, indicating that these two areas do not have access to the highest quality sanitation product (Roefs et al., 2006:33). Interestingly, it was found that 46.9% of citizens in formal rural areas have access to flush

toilets connected to the municipal sewage system and 28% of citizens in formal rural areas make use of flush toilets connected to a septic tank, meaning that a total of 74,9% of these citizens have access to a flush toilet (Roefs et al., 2006:33). This is surprisingly high for an area outside of the formal urban city centre. It is only in formal urban areas that a significant number of citizens have access to a flush toilet – measured at 92.3%, as seen in the following table below (Roefs et al., 2006: 33).

Table 4-17: Type of toilet available to household by geographic area

| SANITATION SOURCE | Urban Formal | Urban Informal | Tribal | Rural Formal | Total |
|---|--------------|----------------|--------|--------------|-------|
| Flush toilet connected to a municipal sewage system | 92,3% | 15% | - | 46,9% | 73,2% |
| Flush toilet connected to a septic tank | 0,8% | | | 28,0% | 1,5% |
| Chemical toilet | | 0,7% | | 2,7% | 0,2% |
| Pit latrine – long drop with a ventilation pipe | 0,7% | 15,1% | 45,6% | | 5,5% |
| Pit latrine – long drop without a ventilation pipe | 6,3% | 65,5% | 50,9% | 2,4% | 18,1% |
| Bucket toilet | | 0,7% | | | 0,1% |
| None | | 2,7% | 3,5% | 20,0% | 1,3% |
| Total | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

Source: Roefs et al. (2006:33)

Conversely, when considering the findings for pit latrines without ventilation (which is seen as a less than ideal sanitation option) 65% of citizens in formal urban areas and 50% in tribal areas in Tshwane had to rely on it (Roefs et al., 2006:33). This suggests that at the time, sanitation services in Tshwane still faced a backlog.¹⁶

¹⁶ Fortunately, SA public services are gradually eradicating the bucket system, which is the worst possible option apart from having no access to sources of sanitation (Statistics SA, 2016:68). The Community Survey results indicated that a mere 2.2% of SA citizens, as opposed to 4.1% in 2001, utilised the bucket system in 2016 (Statistics SA, 2016:68). This tendency was also mirrored in the Tshwane case study where it appears that only residents in the informal urban areas of Tshwane were subjected to the bucket sanitation system, which research then reported as 0.7% (Roefs et al., 2006:33). Unfortunately, this success is somewhat dampened by the total number of citizens with no access to toilet sanitation services (Statistics SA, 2016:68). In 2016, the community survey found that a total of 2.4% of the SA population had no access to any form of toilet sanitation services, and that an additional 1.6% relied on “other” forms of sanitation (Statistics SA, 2016:68). This effectively means that 4% of the

Unfortunately, none of the case examples selected for this research indicated the location of toilet sanitation facilities, which is a crucial aspect from a services accessibility and personal safety /security perspective (Statistics SA, 2016:69). Both quality dimensions (i.e. accessibility and personal safety) influences overall satisfaction with the service (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:421). (Also refer to Table 2-8 of this research). Children, women, disabled persons and other vulnerable individuals should be able to access toilet facilities without exposing themselves to danger (Statistics SA, 2016:69).

Unlike the analysis of satisfaction with water services discussed earlier in 4.3.3, “reasonable access”, as highlighted by Roberts and Hemson (2008:56) of toilet facilities excluded those facilities situated outside of the yard due to service-specific safety considerations (Statistics SA, 2016:69). This is illustrated by the considerable difference in results between access to toilet facilities inside the house and the yard, as opposed to access to facilities outside of the yard (Statistics SA, 2016:69). The results indicate that access to toilet facilities inside the house and inside the yard clearly were preferred options that would satisfy the need in terms of toilet sanitation services. In the case of water facilities, by contrast, “reasonable access” included piped water in communal taps leading to citizen satisfaction even when situated outside of citizens’ yards (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:56).

The SASAS survey measured agreement with the positive Batho Pele-based (SASAS) statements regarding the provision of electricity as another basic household public service. As established during the discussions on water and sanitation, the less access citizens had to a service, the less satisfied they were with the service. It is ironic that those with no access to electricity indicated a relatively high level of agreement with the SASAS statements (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:56). Among citizens with no access to electricity, 40.1 indicated agreement with the statements, as opposed to 32 indicated agreement among those with other forms of access. The latter group indicating 32, represented the lowest levels of access to the service (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:56).

With regard to electricity, it is noticeable that the satisfaction with electricity is generally low amongst citizens, with 52.4 and 55.8 ratings amongst citizens with prepaid meters and those with in-house meters (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:56). The low levels of agreement recorded

total national population was excluded from access to what is considered decent toilet sanitation services in 2016 (Statistics SA, 2016:68) which causes concern

with the Batho Pele-based statements are puzzling and indicate relatively high levels of dissatisfaction with electricity services.

Roberts and Hemson (2008:56) noted that those with no access, as well as those who rely on other forms of access (i.e. through generators and by means of illegal access) are substantially less satisfied with their municipality's performance in terms of electricity provision compared to those citizens who have access to either in-house metered connections and those using pre-paid electricity.

Table 4-18 summarises the BPI scores for electricity services, as established by the HSRC/SASAS survey (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:56).

Table 4-18: Mean Batho Pele Index score (0-100): access to basic household services, with specific regard to electricity

| Main source of household electricity | |
|--------------------------------------|------|
| In-house meter | 55.8 |
| In-house prepaid meter | 52.4 |
| Other forms of access | 32.0 |
| No access to electricity | 40.1 |
| South Africa | 51.5 |

Source: Roberts and Hemson (2008:56)

Conversely, Table 4-18 indicates that citizens who have no access to electricity showed a higher level of satisfaction compared to those people who have to rely on "other forms of access" (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:56). However, they still rated their municipality significantly lower than the first two groupings with full (or premium) access to electricity (i.e. in-house meters and pre-paid meters) This means that citizens generally would prefer to have full access to electricity through in-house meters or through pre-paid meters (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:56). Limited access to the premium or full-service options for electricity services (i.e. in-house meters and prepaid in-house meters) proves to be a contributing factor to low customer satisfaction levels regarding the provision of electricity.¹⁷

¹⁷ The community survey indicated that only 10,2% and 3,1% of households obtained their electricity from municipal and Eskom billing (Statistics SA, 2016:74) in 2016. This is a stark comparison with the statistics for Eskom and pre-paid municipal users which amounted to 46.6% and 38,7% respectively and implies that premium electricity service options are still limited although, in defence of Government,

In the case of electricity provision, it is evident that citizens opted for the costliest service distribution alternative, unlike with water provision where citizens were satisfied with the lower cost alternatives, as discussed previously in Table 4-13 (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:56). This could be ascribed to what citizens use electricity for and its impact on their daily lives (Hawes & Mohamed, 2009:2).

Table 4-19 below indicates a national scoring in terms of electricity provision, based on Muidex. It used different classification categories for access to electricity (Hawes & Mohamed, 2009:2). The table provides a breakdown of electricity services according to the purposes for which electricity is used in the average household, namely lighting, cooking and heating (Hawes & Mohamed, 2009:2). The purposes could also be interpreted as indicating the status of access to electricity, i.e. electricity for the purposes of lighting being the lowest level of access.

Table 4-19: Break-down of access to electricity, and national average score

| Access to Electricity | National |
|-----------------------|----------|
| Electricity- Lighting | 80.10% |
| Electricity- Cooking | 66.40% |
| Electricity- Heating | 58.70% |

Source: Hawes & Mohamed (2009:2)

According to the statistics, 80% of the South African population uses electricity for the purposes of lighting whilst 66.4% has used it for cooking and 58.7% use it for the purpose of heating (Hawes & Mohamed, 2009:2). The difference in the application of electricity indicates what the majority of citizens really use and need it for what in this scenario amounts to lighting (Hawes & Mohamed 2009:2).¹⁸

the percentage of households using both the Eskom and prepaid municipal electricity supply has increased (Statistics SA, 2016:74). This indicates that access to premium service options in this regard is improving.

¹⁸ The community survey indicated that the trends in terms of the application or use of electricity remained the same (Statistics SA, 2016:78). The results indicated that 90.3% of total national

This notion is strengthened through subsequent research findings that indicated a continuous increase of households using electricity as the main source of energy for lighting over time with an increase from 84.7% in 2011 to 90.7% in 2014 (Statistics SA, 2016:78). This means that the primary source of lighting for most citizens is electricity, indicating that the service should be a priority for Government and all effort should be made to improve the service to the level that provides satisfaction to citizens.

The fact that citizens with access to electricity use it for cooking only 66.4% of the time (Hawes & Mohamed, 2009:2) indicates that they use alternative sources of energy for cooking, e.g. gas, paraffin, wood, coal, solar energy (Statistics SA, 2016:79). Subsequent research has indicated that the use of other energy sources for cooking such as paraffin, wood and coal has declined over time, compared to their use in 1996 (Statistics SA, 2016:76). The same principle applies to lighting. Subsequent research has indicated a decline in the percentage of the use of paraffin and candles as energy sources for lighting, despite their higher use in 1996 (Statistics SA, 2016:78).

households use electricity for lighting (Statistics SA, 2016:78), compared to 80.1% of households in 2009 (Hawes & Mohamed, 2009:2).

4.3.4. Socio-economic disparities and perceptions regarding public sector service performance

Another source of concern relates to socio-economic disproportion noted during this research. The possibility of the living standards measures (LSM) as a possible indicator and an index demonstrating the different assets that various households possess (Roefs et al., 2006:22) was investigated. In the Tshwane case example, it was found that households in the lower LSM segmentations seem to generally pull at the shorter end of the stick as far as public services are concerned (Roefs et al., 2006:22). Access to piped water was 88% in low LSM versus 98.8% in high LSM households (Roefs et al., 2006:22).

Table 4-20 below sets out the research results for access to piped water by citizens of different LSM levels in the City of Tshwane, and also reveals that the LSM grouping classified as low also has a relatively high percentage of citizens relying on un-piped water (i.e. 11%) as opposed to approximately 2% in the other LSM groupings (Roefs et al., 2006: 22).

Table 4-20: Source of water for LSM

| SOURCE OF WATER | Low | Middle | High | Total |
|-----------------|-------|--------|-------|-------|
| Piped water | 88,8% | 97,6% | 98,0% | 96,2% |
| Un-piped water | 11,2% | 2,4% | 2, % | 3,8% |
| Total | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

Source: Roefs et al. (2006:22)

The results for the type of sanitation that the various LSM groups have access to showed similar tendencies and is presented in Table 4-21 below (Roefs et al., 2006:34). As in the previous discussion on water sources relating to LSM (Roefs et al., 2006:22), the ideal service in terms of sanitation (i.e. a flush toilet which is connected to the municipal sewage system) is likely to be accessed more readily by citizens in the higher LSM segmentations. Approximately 97% of citizens in the higher LSM segmentation, have access to such a sanitation option, and a mere 14% of the group in the lower LSM segmentation has access to this ideal sanitation service option (Roefs et al., 2006:34).

Furthermore, 66% of citizens in the low LSM group make use of the least ideal and possibly the most undesirable sanitation service, i.e. the pit latrine without ventilation, whilst no one in the high LSM group is subjected to using the pit latrine system (Roefs et al., 2006:34). It is also the citizens in the low LSM who have no access to sanitation services who were

measured at 5%, indicating a relatively low percentage which is still higher than all the other LSM groups (Roefs et al., 2006:34).

These findings clearly strengthen the notion that access to services in Tshwane is disproportionate when it comes to LSM segmentation.

Table 4-21: Type of toilet available by LSM

| SANITATION SOURCE | Low | Middle | High | Total |
|---|-------|--------|-------|-------|
| Flush toilet connected to a municipal sewage system | 14,1% | 79,1% | 97,4% | 73,7% |
| Flush toilet connected to a septic tank | 1,1% | 0,7% | 2,6% | 1,4% |
| Chemical toilet | | 0,4% | | 0,2% |
| Pit latrine – long drop with a ventilation pipe | 12,9% | 7,1% | | 5,7% |
| Pit latrine – long drop without a ventilation pipe | 66,6% | 11,9% | | 17,7% |
| Bucket toilet | | 0,2% | | 0,1% |
| None | 5,2% | 0,6% | | 1,2% |
| Total | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

Source: Roefs et al. (2006 34)

The Tshwane case example also compared the results of the LSM groups according to the various racial groups in Tshwane and found little variation regarding access to piped water between the key racial groupings, as indicated in Table 4-22 below (Roefs et al., 2006:22). It reveals that the percentages of citizens having access to pipe-led water are relatively comparable and varies between 95% and 97% across all racial groupings.

Table 4-22: Source of water by race of respondent

| SOURCE OF WATER | Black | Coloured | Indian | White | Total |
|-----------------|-------|----------|--------|-------|-------|
| Piped water | 95,4% | 100% | 100% | 97,3% | 96,0% |
| Un-piped water | 4,6% | | | 2,7% | 4,0% |
| Total | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

Source: Roefs et al. (2006:22)

It appears that race (for the purposes of this particular case example) does not seem to be a factor which determines access to basic services, but rather the level of LSM as discussed above in Table 4-21 (Roefs et al., 2006:34). According to these findings, it can be concluded that the lower the LSM levels within a social grouping, the less access that grouping has to a particular service (Roefs et al., 2006:34). Historically, race has an effect on LSM because black, coloured and Indian citizens under the former regime were economically marginalised.

Citizens belonging to these social groupings tend to fall under the lower LSM groupings. Therefore, if LSM effects access to services, then race (indirectly) should also have an effect on services access. Race can therefore not be totally excluded as a factor that determines access to basic services, as stated in the Tshwane study (Roefs et al., 2006:34).

The Munidex case example did not address the socio-economic aspects relating to public services. Roberts and Hemson also investigated the Batho Pele principles in relation to social disparities, and found that those living under poorer conditions are more likely to rate the performance of their municipality lower than those residents with medium and high living standards (2008:57). In spite of attempts by Government to provide free basic services and to clear the services backlog (as discussed previously in 1.3 of this research document), households with lower levels of access to basic service are much more discontented with the extent to which their service providing municipalities are complying with the Batho Pele principles (2008:56).

Relating to the services backlog, there appears to be a socio-economic divide in terms of how citizens perceive public services and Local Government, which is supported by findings obtained through examining BPI scores in relation to LSM's (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:57). The results varied significantly from each other, meaning that the percentage difference between the various quintiles was significant (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:57). It showed that those citizens from low LSM segmentations were more likely to rate their municipality much lower than those people from higher LSM segmentations (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:57). With regards to the previous discussion on the effect of race (Table 4-22) and LSM segmentation (Table 4-21) on access to services, black, coloured and Indian citizens (who tend to fall under the lower LSM segmentations) due to the previous dispensation) would be rating their municipalities lower than the majority of white citizens (who tend to fall under the higher LSM segmentations).

The SASAS survey case example also converted the total household income responses into per capita monthly income values, and income distribution was consequently grouped into income quintiles of 20% per group (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:57). As with the LSM segmentations, income-based disparities were also evident – the poorest three quintiles showed BPI scores which were well below the average score of 51.5. The lowest income per capita group scored 41.8 whilst the medium income group scored 52.4. The highest income group scored 58.5 (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:57) which is relatively higher than the lower and medium income groups. The differences in scoring varied significantly from one to the next and also from the average score (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:57). This indicates that lower

income households are significantly more dissatisfied with public services. It can also be linked to the previous finding that citizens from lower LSM segmentations are more dissatisfied with services (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:57).

These statistics presented in Figure 4-8 below (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:57). It is also evident that the scoring generally remains low [i.e. just over half (51.4)], indicating that general agreement with the Batho Pele statements are low, which conveys a lot about the perception of government performance being negative or low.

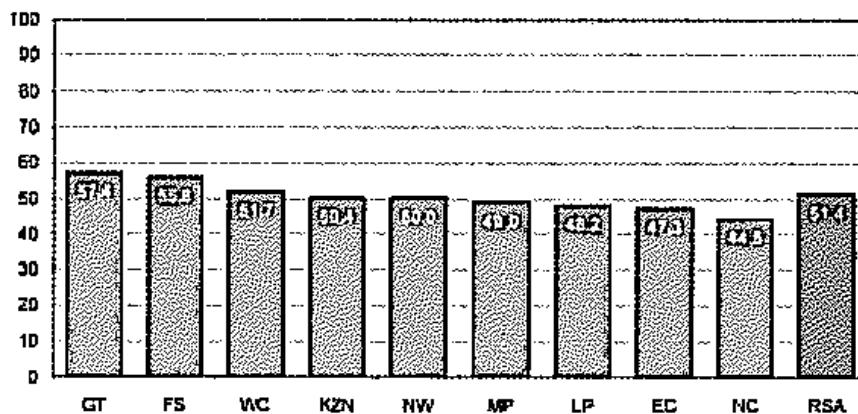


Figure 4-8: Mean BPI Scores by province

Source: Roberts and Hemson (2008:55)

This means that nationally, agreement with Batho Pele statements is low, and that the general perception of municipal performance is also low, especially in the lower income per capita households. The SASAS survey case example was therefore able to pinpoint this perception to the location where it is a burning issue and able to indicate that it should be a priority for Local Government to address and remedy this situation.

The Tshwane survey case example also investigated citizen perceptions regarding municipalities (Roefs et al., 2006:53). Where the SASAS survey grouped the responses according to the Batho Pele principles; the Tshwane survey grouped participant responses according to dissatisfaction with customer care and procedures, dissatisfaction with municipal delivery and perceived deterioration in delivery (Roefs et al., 2006:54). The results showed that the dissatisfaction with municipal service delivery ($M = 3.5$) was higher than the dissatisfaction with customer care and procedures within municipal offices ($M = 3.0$) and most residents seemed to think that municipal service delivery had deteriorated ($M = 3.4$) (Roefs et al., 2006:54). Note that a mean score of “three” would represent an average where the perception was neither positive nor negative.

The perceived low levels of municipal service delivery pose the question on the extent to which these perceptions influence political behaviour, especially because evidence suggest that government performance has an effect on institutional trust (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:58). Analysis of the SASAS survey and other attitudinal surveys collected by the HSRC, indicated that trust in local and national government dropped by approximately 20 percentage points between 2004 and 2007, and by 16 percentage points for political parties (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:58). According to these studies, approximately 34% of South Africans put their confidence in their Local Government in 2007, as opposed to 39% who trusted the police (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:58). Political parties consistently received the lowest trust ratings, scoring 27% in 2007 (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:58).

The lack of institutional trust was confirmed by both the OR Tambo and Tshwane case examples. The Tshwane case example revealed that in 2006, only 35,4% of community members regularly participated in municipal ward meetings while almost twice as many members (65,5%) did not attend (Zama, 2012:3). The OR Tambo case example reported a similar trend. In 2012, even less community members attended ward meetings (28,8%), whilst 70% of the community members did not attend these public participation gatherings (Zama, 2012:3). Some of the reasons cited for this included failure of councillors to relay issues to community leaders (which negatively effects service delivery), most councillors were not equipped with the necessary knowledge regarding development processes, and the lack of feedback on grievances raised in previous meetings (which implies that nothing has been done to rectify such grievances) (Zama, 2012:3-4).

The perceived low levels of municipal service performance are likely to instil feelings of distrust in government (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:59). In the SASAS case example, the relationship between perceived performance and unconventional or non-institutionalised political actions was also investigated (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:59). Unconventional political behaviour includes non-electoral and non-institutionalised behaviour and can range from peaceful protest actions such as attending a peaceful demonstration and signing petitions, to more radical protest behaviour such as engaging in boycotts; occupying buildings or streets; and unlawful strike action (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:59)

It was found that citizens who were prepared to participate in various forms of non-institutionalised political participative actions, tended to rate their municipalities higher against the Batho Pele principles, as seen in Table 4-23 below (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:60). A possible explanation offered by the authors, is the belief of such citizens that their actions have

a positive influence on decision-making and will bring about improvements in public sector service performance (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:60).

Table 4-23: Scores by engagement in non-institutionalised political participation in 2007

| BPI Score (0-100) | | Attend demonstration or protest march | Participate in a boycott of rates | Participate in disruption of government meeting, sit-in | Use force or violent methods |
|---------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| Yes | | 51.5 | 53.6 | 57.7 | 58.8 |
| No, but would do it | | 49.4 | 49.2 | 48.5 | 51.4 |
| No, I would never do this | | 52.4 | 52.2 | 51.8 | 51.3 |
| South Africa | | 41.5 | 51.6 | 51.7 | 51.7 |

Source: Roberts and Hemson (2008:60)

More interestingly, the group that indicated that they had not engaged in protest activities but would like to do it, rated municipal performance lower against the Batho Pele principles, as indicated in the previously discussed Table 4-23 (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:60). This group represent the potential pool of protestors and is deserving policy attention. In the event of their grievances not being addressed in the near future, it is likely that service delivery protests as mentioned in 1.1 of this research (Business Day, 2009b) will continue and escalate (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:60).

When examining the mean scores of those who indicated that they would never engage in either of the four forms of unconventional political behaviour mentioned here, it is seen as significantly lower than the scores of those who have indicated “yes”, with the begrudging “no, but I would do it” group scoring the lowest (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:60). The average scoring is also well below that of the group who indicated “yes” revealing the latter group’s relatively high scoring (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:60).

This is a clear indication that satisfaction with public services is linked to citizens actively partaking in service processes and sharing their perspectives and experiences on the matter. Citizens want to contribute to the public services debate. Consultation with citizens therefore becomes vital in terms of public services, as pointed out by the SASAS survey case example which reported that respondents generally experienced that Local Government is improving delivery but is not managing to communicate and respond to their service priorities (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54).

Neither the service delivery index (i.e. Munidex) nor the citizen report card survey (i.e. the Tshwane case example) investigated institutional trust, which represents a significant indicator for service quality and citizen satisfaction. In the discussion about quality assessment criteria (see Table 2-8 of this research) it was indicated that credibility or trustworthiness / honesty of the service provider is key to achieving service quality. The credibility criterium is applicable to Government, but in the form of institutional trust, as indicated by the SASAS survey (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:59). If service quality in Government is to be improved, then serious thought should be given to increasing institutional trust in Government organisations.

4.4. CONCLUSION

The Munidex case example, being an index, was by nature unable to analyse this occurrence at all, mainly because an index it is not designed to include perceptions. The Munidex provided status and improvement information and benchmarked such information against other municipalities (whether local, district or metropolitan) and the national aggregate, but was unable to provide an in-depth analysis of issues and disparities.

It is evident from the above examination of the selected case examples that only those research instruments that are focused on perceptions that are able to explore the patterns and phenomena displayed by research surveys and can provide in-depth analysis to explaining them. The Tshwane case example made use of one of the participatory monitoring and evaluation instruments, i.e. the citizen report card method, as discussed before (Civicus & PG Exchange, 2012:2), and was by its nature limited to feedback information only (Pekkonen, 2012:1- 5), but appears to have been adapted to also include perceptions, as mentioned earlier. The perceptions obtained were limited; when the perceptions obtained during the Tshwane study were compared to those presented by SASAS (which bear very close resemblance to another participatory monitoring and evaluation instrument, i.e. stakeholder surveys) SASAS's results provided more insight and catered for a deeper level of analysis of the research findings (Sadashiva, 2012:2-5).

However, the research information presented by the Munidex on the opposite side of the continuum, provided clear baseline performance information and acted as an indicator for government as an industry (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:18). The SASAS case example, on the other hand, was designed to measure and has been measuring the public's attitudes, beliefs, behavioural patterns and values over time (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:53) and is therefore able

provide the level of analysis required to inform service failure examinations as well as service improvement plans (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:18-19).

It is important to bear in mind, though, that information such as that produced by SASAS is based on participants' perceived reality and how they have internalized their consumption experience. This, however, is not always a reflection of reality. The research information presented by indexes like the Munidex is a true depiction of reality and is able to provide an accurate reflection of (a) the current status of service delivery and (b) key benchmarking information in relation to others (i.e. other municipalities) and in relation to self (i.e. improvement over time) (Hawes & Mahomed, 2009:1) – perception-based surveys are unable to and are not designed to yield such results, hence providing the reason for including both survey types as part of any services improvement endeavour, and applying both “hard” and “soft” service measures to obtain an extensive view on service quality (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:426-427).

As discussed in the literature overview, perceived service quality is the result of an evaluation process during which users compare their perceptions of service delivery and outcomes thereof to their expectations of the service (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:420). As also mentioned in prior discussions on various theories of quality, the service-based theoretical approach which argues that the specific nature of services requires a distinctive approach to measuring service quality (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:419) was deemed most applicable to this research study and its ability to evaluate services according to their nature is key.

In terms of the case literature research findings, the following observations were made. For the theme - relationship between perceived service levels and satisfaction - there is a direct relationship between limited access to services and service satisfaction. For the theme on geographic variance, it was observed that rural areas tend to have the least access to basic municipal services (with the exception of Gamagara municipality) and therefore rate Government service performance lowly.

As far as the theme relating to access to basic services is concerned, Government should consult citizens regarding their specific service needs and expectations. When prioritising according to citizens' feedback, Government will be able to respond more effectively to the service expectations and deliver a level of service which is satisfying for citizens. For the theme concerning socio-economic disparities and perceptions regarding public sector service performance, it was found that access to services in Tshwane is disproportionate when it comes to LSM segmentation – those citizens in the lower LSM segmentations have less

access to quality services than those citizens in the higher LSM segmentations. There is a connection between race, low LSM segmentation and access to services. Satisfaction with Government service delivery is generally low and leads to declining institutional trust.

In summary, chapter 4 investigated the role of perceptions in public service quality assessment. The analysis of case literature from previous service delivery compared the various survey service quality outcomes and identified common themes in terms of the survey results. A key focus of this analysis was to ascertain the contribution of perception-based surveys in terms of public service assessment. It was found that these surveys did produce results which provided a different perspective supplementing the results of the institutional feedback surveys. Chapter 4 proved that it is essential to consider both sets of information institutional feedback as well as perception-based surveys, in order to effectively investigate service quality.

Chapter 5 will focus the attention on the design and development of a service quality framework which will be based on the key findings of the literature review and the various case literature which was analysed in this research.

5. CHAPTER 5: SERVICE IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK & STRATEGY

5.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter focused on the service improvement framework whereby citizen perceptions can be factored in to local public service value systems. This which will be achieved through citizen evaluation and particularly the application PME methods. The framework will include the following aspects: (i) dimensions of service quality specifically adapted for the public sector to facilitate service assessment, (ii) a diagnostic instrument to identify public service quality problems which are specifically adapted for the public sector, (iii) a service improvement strategy, and a service improvement plan to narrow and address the customer gap between expected and perceived service, which encompasses all other quality provider gaps.

Firstly, attention is given to the service quality assessment and the dimensions or measurement standards specifically. The aim is to revisit the concept of quality assessment in the public sector and to define context-specific dimensions or evaluative measures on which service quality assessment can be based. Lastly, the chapter will present an investigation into the role of communication with regards to PME. As mentioned before, communication (and specifically development communication) provides the backdrop against which community interactions can take place. Such community interactions in turn, underlie and support citizen evaluation and service quality assessment as well as improvement.

The next part of the analysis will focus on the service quality dimensions and adapting these dimensions to make render them suitable for the specific demands of the public sector.

5.2. SERVICE QUALITY ASSESSMENT: QUALITY DIMENSIONS

As mentioned before, quality constitutes a focused evaluation of services based on the five broad service dimensions which include reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles (Zeithaml et al., 1990:111). The quality dimensions are applied by consumers in evaluating services (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:406). The original service dimensions included five additional dimensions which were very similar, as stated in subsequent research, and were therefore grouped together (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:406). As an example, the dimension of assurance currently includes competence, courtesy, credibility and security (Zeithaml et al., 1990:25). Empathy also currently includes a group of similar dimensions, i.e. access, communication, and understanding the customer (Zeithaml et al., 1990:25). Table 5-24 below presents a summative comparison between the 10 original service dimensions and the new consolidated 5 service dimensions.

Table 5-24: Correspondence between the original ten service quality dimensions and the five consolidated service quality dimensions

| Original dimensions for service delivery | SERVQUAL Dimensions | | | | |
|---|---------------------|-------------|----------------|-----------|---------|
| | Tangibles | Reliability | Responsiveness | Assurance | Empathy |
| Tangibles | X | | | | |
| Reliability | | X | | | |
| Responsiveness | | | X | | |
| Competence Courtesy Credibility Security | | | | X | |
| Access Communication Understanding the customer | | | | | X |

Source: Zeithaml et al. (1990:25)

Although clustering or combining similar dimensions is logical, this research required a reversion back to the original dimensions as that version provides greater detail as to what exactly comprises the components of service quality and would enable the researcher to more effectively examine the Batho Pele principles. The following step would be to ascertain whether the above-mentioned quality dimensions were relevant to the public sector and

whether there was a possibility of applying them to the public services, which are by nature quite distinct from private sector services, as discussed previously.

5.2.1. Quality Dimensions and the Public Sector

The Batho Pele White Paper mentions “service standards” for the public sector¹⁹ that constitute commitments providing specified levels and quality of service to individual customers (Republic of South Africa, 1997). These standards differ from targets, which were defined as longer-termed aims for the level of service quality to be achieved (Republic of South Africa, 1997). The White Paper specified that these “service standards” have to cover customers’ main requirements, e.g. accessibility of services, response times, turnaround times, accuracy, courtesy, the provision of information, and dealing with complaints (Republic of South Africa, 1997). It appears that the “service standards” as set out in the White Paper correspond to service quality dimensions as specified by Zeithaml et al. (1990:25). It therefore seemed to be of value to include a discussion focused on developing quality dimensions for the public sector.

Table 5-25 below represents a summary of the comparison between the 10 original service dimensions and the Batho Pele principles.

Table 5-25 Comparison between the 10 original service dimensions and the Batho Pele principles

| SERVQUAL Dimensions | Original (10) Dimensions | Definition | Batho Pele Principle | Batho Pele Application |
|---------------------|--------------------------|---|---------------------------|---|
| -Assurance | Competence | Possession of the skills and knowledge required to perform the service. | N/A | This dimension has not been catered for in the Batho Pele principles. |
| | Courtesy | Politeness; respect; consideration; and friendliness of the service delivery contact personnel. | Courtesy | Treating all people with respect. |
| | Credibility | Trustworthiness/ honesty of the service provider. | Openness and transparency | Providing regular feedback on service delivery performance |
| | Security | Freedom from danger. | N/A | This dimension has not been catered for in the Batho Pele principles. |

¹⁹ Also refer to section 7.2.7 (Republic of South Africa, 1997).

| | | | | |
|----------------|----------------------------|---|---|--|
| Empathy | Access | Approachability and ease of contact. | Increasing Access | Equal access to basic service for all South Africans. |
| | Communication | Listening to customers and keeping them informed in a language they can understand (and relate to?) | Consultation Providing Information | Consult with communities on basic services (This is more comprehensive than "communication" as it is more interactive than communication as it implies feedback from the citizen. Striving to disseminate information regarding basic services. |
| | Understanding the Customer | Making the effort to know consumers and their needs | Consultation | Consult with communities on basic services. |
| Tangibles | Tangibles | Appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication | N/A | This aspect is not addressed by the Batho Pele principles and also inappropriate for public services. |
| Reliability | Reliability | Ability to perform the promised service | N/A | This aspect is not addressed by the Batho Pele principles. |
| Responsiveness | Responsiveness | Willingness to help customers Performing prompt service | Redress | Rapid response Fixes problems |

Sources: Adapted from Zeithaml et al. (1990:25); Lovelock and Wirtz (2007:407); Roberts and Hemson (2008:54); White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery or Batho Pele White Paper (Republic of South Africa, 1997)

Dimensions which have not been addressed at all in the Batho Pele principles include security, competence, reliability and tangibility (Zeithaml et al., 1990:25; Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54). Competence refers to the possession of skills and knowledge relating to the relevant service as well as the actual ability to perform the promised service (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:407). The

practical implication of not providing for competence and reliability as quality dimensions for public services, is that it is impossible to test for it when evaluating service quality. The consumer will, however, look for these dimensions as they are based on what consumers use to evaluate services, even if it is not promoted within the organisation (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:406-407). From a strategic point of view, it will be difficult to improve service delivery without addressing the competence and reliability of staff. Not even the FSDM operational programme for monitoring and evaluation relating to frontline public sector personnel, addresses competence or reliability in their key performance areas on which monitoring is based (Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation, 2015:7-8).

The Tshwane case example tested perceptions of municipalities according to the geographic divisions of formal and informal urban, tribal and formal rural areas but merely required of participants to indicate their dissatisfaction with the delivery of municipal services generally (Roefs et al., 2006:54). The case example concerning SASAS was based on the Batho Pele principles as quality indicators and did not test for security and competence (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:53).

The dimension relating to tangibles (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:407) is not addressed in the Batho Pele principles (Roberts and Hemson, 2008:54). Physical evidence and tangible cues relating to service delivery are significant as customers often rely on such tangible aspects to assess their satisfaction with the service during and after service delivery (Zeithaml et al., 2009:313). In the public sector, however, it is expected of public servants and officials to deal with resources responsibly and efficient, economic and effective use of resources ought to be promoted (Republic of South Africa, 1996). Service delivery evidence and tangible cues such as press releases and printed material (Zeithaml et al., 2009:313, 315) would be more in line with public services values of efficiency and saving than costly physical facilities and equipment where the resources spent could have been used to provide basic services to economically vulnerable citizens. When dealing with service tangibles in the public sector, caution needs to be taken to ensure that the principles of efficiency and equitability are always present (Republic of South Africa, 1997).

Reliability or the ability to perform the promised service is also not addressed by the Batho Pele principles (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54). The principle of “redress” addresses failure to deliver but not the ability to deliver satisfactorily the first time, and it is almost as if care for a service problem is made provision for (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54) but no assurance is provided of competence in that Local Government will strive to prevent service problems from occurring in the first place and that services will be rendered properly the first time. The

reliability of service delivery from the onset is therefore not guaranteed. The concept of service recovery or the actions taken by an organisation in response to a service failure (Zeithaml et al., 2009:212) are discussed in greater detail later in this research report. The same can be said for responsiveness, the willingness to help customers and the ability to perform prompt service (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:407). As mentioned before, redress in terms of the Batho Pele principles (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54) implies rapid response and the guaranteed delivery, but it should apply only after an unsatisfactory service experience and be executed in a manner that leads to customer satisfaction (Hoffman & Bateson, 2006:572).

The public sector approach to interpreting access is quite different from that of the private sector. Increasing access in the public sector refers to equal access to basic services (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54). This is quite different from the private sector interpretation of the same concept which is taken to mean the approachability and ease of contact with staff during service delivery (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:407). As mentioned before, the public sector is based on the principle of equity (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:18) and it is obvious that this value should be reflected in its service outcomes. The Batho Pele principles are no exception and clearly state in section 4.3.1 of the document that it is aimed at rectifying the inequalities of distribution in existing services (Republic of South Africa, 1997:18). This is also indicative of the unique nature of collective services where it is characteristic of such services to be non-exclusive, i.e. that citizens cannot normally be excluded from utilising these services irrespective of whether or not they are paying for it (Gildenhuis & Knipe, 2000:58).

As for the approachability of service staff, employees play a crucial role in the context of the service organisation and its customers as the service levels delivered by frontline employees can be an important source of differentiation for the organisation (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:302). Both public and private sector interpretations of access are necessary to ensure that this quality dimension is optimally implemented in the public sector.

The dimensions of communication and understanding the customer are well addressed in all aspects by the Batho Pele principles (refer to the table below) and in some instances the Batho Pele interpretation is more comprehensive than that of the quality dimensions. Communication, or listening to customers and keeping them informed in a language they can understand (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:407), appears to relate to the Batho Pele reference to consultation and providing information (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54). Consultation means that citizens should be consulted about the level and quality of the services they receive (Gildenhuis & Knipe, 2000:131), whilst information implies that government institutions must provide full, accurate and up-to-date information about their activities (Gildenhuis & Knipe, 157

2000:131). It appears that consultation has more impact than communication as consultation enables citizens to influence public decision making, whereas communication merely involves listening to customers. The combination of consultation and information, as specified in the Batho Pele principles, implies a strategic approach to engaging with citizens – the consultation process being aimed at finding out what citizens want to know, and only then to determine where and when the information can best be dispersed or released (Gildenhuis & Knipe, 2000:132). This amounts to more than just paying attention to people and keeping them informed in understandable language, as prescribed by the communication quality dimension (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:407).

The Batho Pele principles of value for money as well as the principle of setting service standards are not catered for in the quality dimensions. The need to customise the dimensions (as applied in the SERVQUAL relationship survey mentioned before) to suit specific research contexts have been expressed by critics commenting on the application of the quality dimensions (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011). In fact, it was for this reason that the majority of researchers using SERVQUAL omit from or add to or change the list of statements (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011). The two above-mentioned principles address specific aspects of the public domain and play a key role in service quality measurement.

Setting service standards is discussed under the service quality gaps analysis where shortcomings in service design and standards have been investigated (Zeithaml et al. 2009:36-37, 247). It is ironic that the authors made provision for diagnosing service quality shortcomings in terms of service standards and designs and included it in this particular discussion (Zeithaml et al., 2009:36-37), but then omitted it during the development of the service dimensions (Zeithaml et al., 1990:25). This implies that one currently can only measure service standards and design shortcomings against tangibles (as a quality standard), which relates to the physical evidence and service scape strategies to address the gap. The Batho Pele principles address this point and include (a) baseline standards for nationwide service delivery; and (b) intradepartmental service standards to serve as minimum norms for internal departments (Gildenhuis & Knipe, 2000:131).

Regarding value for money, [which Gildenhuis and Knipe (2000:130-133) omitted to analyse in their discussion on the Batho Pele principles] Roberts and Hemson (2008:54) are not clear about the meaning of value for money, and define it as the situation where people are getting good value for the money which they are charged to obtain a basic service. Cant et al. (2002:238) shed more light on the topic and describe (perceived) value in the private sector as the benefits that customers receive in relation to the total costs incurred including the other

costs associated with the service. According to the authors, research evidence suggests that customers who experience value for money are more generally satisfied, and emphasise that customers tend to want more of the things that they value – be it speed or comfort and ease (Cant et al., 2002:239). It is also argued that customers should be allowed to define service value in an effort to strive for customer satisfaction, because they will ultimately decide whether the service can be deemed value for (their) money (Cant et al., 2002:241).

The Batho Pele White Paper defines value for money as reducing public expenditure and creating a more cost-effective public service for citizens (Republic of South Africa, 1997:22). It continues to state in section 4.8.1 that the Batho Pele initiative must be delivered within departmental resource allocations, and the rate at which services are improved will be affected by the speed with which national and provincial departments achieve efficiency savings that can be ploughed back into improving services (Republic of South Africa, 1997:22). The emphasis is therefore on eliminating waste and inefficiency whilst simultaneously simplifying procedures, to ensure the efficient, economical and effective utilisation of resources in order to enable the continuity of service to all levels of society as stipulated in section 195(1)(b) of the Constitution (Republic of South Africa, 1996), while focusing on meeting the needs of South Africans who are living below the poverty line and those who have previously been disadvantaged in terms of service delivery (Republic of South Africa, 1997:11).

It is evident from the above, that the public sector approaches the concept of value quite differently. Public value, as mentioned previously, encompasses the adding of value to the public domain through the close linking of users and producers, in a joint *product development effort* resulting in tailor-made services which are aimed at meeting previously unmet human needs (Bennington & Moore, 2011:44-45). The two definitions present two very different views, i.e. “value for money” and “adding value” which sum up the respective underlying philosophies well.

The Batho Pele insistence on “value for money” which could be interpreted as quality relative to price contradicts the public sector’s way of costing services (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:19). Most government services are funded through taxation and pricing information is unknown to the public as cost is hidden in the form of general taxation (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:19). It is therefore difficult to compare quality with a price that is unknown. This turns the attention to the view expressed in Cant et al. (2002:239), where the emphasis is not on the price but on the observation that people tend to want more of the things on which they place value. It would therefore be in the interest of the service organisation to listen to the customer in order to find

out what the things entail on which people place value (i.e. the appeal), and allowing people to define value (Cant et al., 2002:239, 241).

Security is another dimension that has not been addressed in the Batho Pele principles. This dimension is necessary but is more applicable to front-line staff assessment as opposed to the whole organisation and is demonstrated in the FSDM operational framework (Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation, 2015:7). The FSDM operational framework has safety as one of its key performance areas, and it includes aspects such as the availability of security guards (excluding the South African Police); the availability of security measures; a sense of safety within the facility; and adherence to health and safety procedures (Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation, 2015:7).

During the case literature analysis of this research (refer to 4.3.3) security issues regarding the public services were also discussed. It is evident that citizens are also require security as a service quality measure.

Although the Batho Pele principles were originally designed as an ethical code of behaviour or conduct, it is also possible for it to provide a basis for concrete assessment for government and municipal performance specifically (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:61).²⁰ During the 2007 round of the SASAS which has been conducted on an annual basis since 2003, nine attitudinal statements corresponding to the eight Batho Pele principles were developed, and intentionally created and drafted to (a) reflect the quality of municipal service delivery; and (b) enable the measurement of attitudes towards municipal performance against the Batho Pele principles (Roberts & Hemson, 2008: 54).

According to Dinsdale and Marson (1999:27), it is difficult to attribute meaning to satisfaction ratings in the absence of normative benchmarks. Reliable comparisons can be made once the various satisfaction ratings are based on the same benchmarks (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:27). The contribution of the above comparison between private sector standards (i.e. the service quality standards) and government sector standards (i.e. the Batho Pele principles) is that a set of service quality standards for the public sector has been established which can also be applied as benchmarks to compare the ratings of similar service providers to determine how well they are performing relative to others (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:27). In this section, the service quality standards have been investigated and compared to the Batho Pele principles

²⁰ Republic of South Africa. 1997:5

and standards or measures on which to base service quality assessment in the public sector were investigated and redefined.

In the next part of the analyses, the diagnostic instrument which can be applied to identify public service quality shortcomings, will be addressed.

5.3. THE DIAGNOSTIC INSTRUMENT

This part of the discussion will continue the focus on a diagnostic instrument which is founded on the gap analysis (or Gaps model) and can be applied to identify service quality shortcomings (Zeithaml et al., 2009:44). (The Gaps model was discussed in 2.3.1 of this research). Once service quality deficiencies can be correctly identified, the appropriate strategies can be applied to remedy the shortfalls. This section also addresses the role of citizen evaluation in the quality improvement process to create an overall improvement strategy.

Although the Gaps model was developed for the private sector, it is possible to link the identified service quality problem areas with the public sector, through the application of the Batho Pele principles (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:53). In this way, public organisations will be enabled to analyse the factors that influence service quality (Zeithaml et al., 2009:44).

In the analysis of each of the gap areas, the appropriate quality dimensions (or measures) as well as the Batho Pele principles that resonates with and corresponds to that gap area will also be indicated and analysed. Lastly, appropriate remedial or gap-closing strategies for each gap will be discussed.



Diagram 5-23: The Gaps model of service quality illustrating the provider gaps with links to the Batho Pele principles and quality dimensions indicated

Sources: Adapted and extended from Lovelock and Wirtz (2007:407); Zeithaml et al., (2009:34); Roberts and Hemson (2008:54)

The listening or knowledge gap relates to the quality standards of consultation, courtesy, redress and access (as interpreted by both the public and the private sector). The quality standards of service standards and tangibles are linked in the service design gap. The service delivery gap relates closely to the quality standards of service of openness and transparency, competence and as reliability. Consultation, openness and transparency, as well as providing information, are linked to the communication gap. The quality standards of increasing access, service standards and tangibles relate to the perceptions gap. The next subsection provides a discussion on the service quality shortcomings or gaps and an investigation of the gap-closing strategies. The related quality standards serve to inform the decision maker about the remedial or gap-closing strategies.

5.3.1. The Listening or Knowledge Gap

Lovelock and Wirtz (2011:406) define this gap as the difference between what senior management believes customers or citizens expect and what their actual needs and expectations entail. When decision makers who are responsible for setting service priorities do not fully comprehend citizens' service expectations, they may trigger a chain of bad decisions and suboptimal resource allocations, which in turn may lead to perceptions of poor service delivery and poor service quality (Zeithaml et al., 2009:34). Accurate information regarding the service-related expectations of citizens is therefore key in addressing the listening gap, and formal as well as informal methods for obtaining information regarding citizens' expectations must be developed and the information has to be captured (Zeithaml et al., 2009:34).

An example of the listening gap is found in the SASAS (South African Social Attitudes Survey) case example where the level of agreement with Batho Pele statements was very low with regard to consultation (i.e. 19 percent) (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:55). According to the Batho Pele White Paper (Republic of South Africa, 1997) consultation includes that citizens should be consulted about the level and quality of the services they receive. The consultation results of the SASAS case example indicate that the citizens' experience was that Government did not take their views into consideration, and generally did not communicate and respond to citizens' priorities (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54;55).

The methods for collecting feedback and for capturing evidence regarding citizens' service expectations (Arnould et al., 2004:227-228), is crucial to addressing the listening gap. Primary data collection methods include SERVQUAL surveys; post transaction surveys; employee surveys; total market service quality surveys; market oriented ethnography; future expectations research; lost customer research; database marketing research; mystery shopping; customer focus group interviews; complaint solicitation; critical incident studies; service expectations meetings; process check point evaluations; customer panels; and upward communication methods (Zeithaml et al., 2009:147-159; Hoffman et al 2006: 351 – 354) and (Zeithaml et al., 2009:166-168). Secondary feedback collection methods include scanner data; syndicated sources; databases; and the internet (Arnould et al., 2004:227).

This variety of methods or tools enable service organisations to find out what customers expect, which is essential to providing quality service (Zeithaml et al., 2009:140). The importance of finding out what customer expectations entail cannot be underestimated.

Despite a genuine interest in meeting customer expectations, service organisations often miss the mark by believing that they know what customers should want and then continue to deliver that, instead of finding out what their customers do want (Zeithaml et al., 2009:140). When this scenario develops, it points to the fact that service provision does not match customer expectations, meaning that important service features are being omitted and the level of performance is declining (Zeithaml et al., 2009:140), which is exactly what was found during the SASAS case example, as discussed previously. This case example indicated that respondents generally felt that Local Government was improving service delivery but was unable to communicate and respond to citizens' priorities (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54), indicating that service delivery improvements were not centred around citizens' expectations.

The gap-closing strategies that can be employed to narrow the listening gap (Zeithaml et al., 2009:176-180, 227-235), involve relationship building with the customer and service recovery after service failure occurred (Zeithaml et al., 2009:176-180; 227-235). The recommended PME based techniques encompass citizen report card surveys, stakeholder surveys and social audits (Pekkonen & Sadashiva, 2012:1-5; Pekkonen, 2012a:1-5; Sadashiva, 2012:2-5). The reason for including citizen evaluation (through participatory monitoring methods or techniques) is based on the need to include citizen feedback in service delivery, as was reiterated in the SASAS case example findings where respondents who engaged in unconventional, non-institutionalised political participation tended to rate their municipalities higher against the Batho Pele principles than those respondents who had not participated in similar events (Civicus & PG Exchange, 2012:2). This was ascribed to respondents' belief that their actions had an impact on and influenced political decisions to bring about improvement in municipal performance (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:60).

5.3.1.1. Service feedback collection tools

There are several methods of obtaining service expectations to narrow the listening gap. It is advised that a combination feedback tools should be selected and applied because each one has its particular strengths and weaknesses and they should jointly be able to deliver the necessary feedback information (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:412). The rationale for obtaining service feedback is to facilitate faster learning and adapt to changes faster (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:408).

Specific key objectives for obtaining service feedback typically include the following: firstly, the assessment and benchmarking of service quality as well as performance, including learning about how well the organisation has performed compared to its main competitors (in the case

of Local Government, this will include other local municipalities at the same level of governance); how it performed compared to the previous year (or month or quarter); whether investments in certain service aspects paid off in terms of customer satisfaction; and where the organisation aimed to be in following next year (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:410). A customer satisfaction index acts as a national indicator for all industries and in essence assesses customer satisfaction at the organisational level and then weighs these findings to determine industry, sector and national measures of quality (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:18).

The South African Customer Satisfaction Index (SAcsi), an independent national benchmark of customer satisfaction with the quality of products and services available to household consumers in South Africa, has found that the City of Cape Town (with a score of 71,6 out of a 100) had the highest score among eight of the largest South African metropolitan municipalities (De Lille, 2014). Consumers awarded an average score of 60,6 out of 100 for the eight metropolitan municipalities (De Lille, 2014). The outcomes of Munidex as mentioned previously, confirmed this rating and found that the City of Cape Town attained the highest score in terms of service delivery (Hawes & Mahomed, 2009:1-2).

Dinsdale and Marson (1999:18) criticised the applicability of the satisfaction index to the public sector. According to these authors, customer satisfaction is based on (a) “perceived quality/performance” which is broken down into two components of consumption experience, namely customisation and reliability; and (b) “perceived level of product quality relative to the price paid”. Regarding the first precursor, the assumption that it is good for customisation to meet customer needs is not necessarily true for the public sector since the latter is based on the principles of due process and equity and is generally averse to treating government clients inequitably as discussed previously (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:18). Regarding “quality relevant to price”, most government services are funded through taxation and cost is hidden in the form of general taxation, which means it is virtually impossible for clients to compare quality and price (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:18-19).

A second key objective for obtaining service feedback includes customer-driven learning and improvements which ask questions such as “What makes our customers happy?” and “What are our strengths and weaknesses?” For this, an organisation needs detailed processes and information to guide service improvement efforts and to accurately identify areas with potential high returns for quality investment (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:411-412). A third objective includes creating a customer-oriented service culture and focusing on customers’ needs and satisfaction for creating a culture of service quality (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:411-412). As discussed, development planning in the form of IDP’s include citizen perceptions as part of

the service process and allow citizen perceptions to form part of the government service quality assessment process, as the IDP feeds directly into service monitoring and evaluation. The inclusion of citizen inputs is a positive step in the direction of creating a customer-oriented culture, which can still be improved.

Key feedback collection tools that can be applied to address the knowledge gap may include the following: total market/ annual and post transactional surveys on overall service satisfaction, service feedback cards, complaint solicitation (unsolicited feedback), critical incident studies, focus group discussions and service reviews, relationship and SERVQUAL surveys, after-sales (post transaction) surveys, employee surveys, mystery shopping, market oriented ethnography, future expectations research, lost customer research, service quality information systems, focus group interviews, service expectations meetings, process check point evaluations, customer panels and upward communication.

a) Total market, annual and post transactional surveys on overall service satisfaction

These surveys typically measure satisfaction with all major service processes (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:412). The level of measurement is at a high level, aiming to obtain a global index or indicator of overall satisfaction for the organisation (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:412). This could be based on indexed (e.g. various attribute ratings) and/ or weighted data (e.g. weighted by core segments and/ or products) (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:412). Satisfaction indices present particular challenges in terms of their applicability to public services (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:18-19). The disadvantage of indices, as mentioned previously, is that they are unable to provide details, e.g. they are able to indicate how (dis)satisfied customers are but not the reasons for such (un)happiness (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:412). As Dinsdale and Marson argued, satisfaction indices are resource-intensive and also unable to inform decision makers on how clients rate the importance of particular services or what their priorities for improvement entail (1999:18). The supposition of customisation to meet specific client needs, is in contradiction with public sector principles of equity and due process (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:18-19). Public sector values require that government clients (i.e. citizens) should all receive the same level of service as well as have access to the same services, thereby rendering the implementation of “public sector customisation” the impossible (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:18-19).

b) Service feedback cards

These feedback tools provide customers with a physical feedback card or, alternatively, an online pop-up form, e-mail, or a SMS can be sent to customers after a substantial service

process, inviting them to provide feedback comments and return it to a central customer feedback unit (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:413-414). An advantage of these cards is that they are good indicators of process quality and provides detailed feedback on what worked well and what did not. Service feedback cards are also advantageous in the sense that they are inexpensive (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:413-414). A possible disadvantage of this tool is that a great deal depends on how easily reachable or contactable the central customer feedback unit is, especially because the use of technology has had a remarkable influence in processes such as these (Cant et al., 2002:69-70), and also whether the feedback unit personnel are able to handle reviews or feedback in languages other than the commonly used language or what Cant et al. (2002:50) refer to as the common language.

c) Complaint solicitation (unsolicited feedback)

Unsolicited feedback is made up of a stream of information from the customer in the form of complaints, compliments and suggestions (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:415). This information feedback stream is a source of detailed feedback on what customers experienced during service delivery (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:415). Like feedback cards (as discussed above), unsolicited feedback is not a reliable measure of overall customer satisfaction, but it serves as a good source of ideas for service quality improvement (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:415) and provides a source of continuous customer feedback (Hoffman & Bateson, 2006: 351). The problem with the implementation of complaints is that organisations address one complaint at a time and often fail to analyse the content of complaints as a group in order to establish a service failure trend that enables the organisation to address a few complaints in one attempt, making service recovery (i.e. the actions taken by an organisation in response to a service failure (Zeithaml et al., 2009:212) less time consuming (Hoffman & Bateson, 2006: 351).

d) Critical incident studies

These relate to qualitative interview procedures during which customers are asked to provide verbatim stories about satisfying and dissatisfying service encounters that they have experienced (Zeithaml et al., 2009:149). Sometimes frontline personnel are asked to put themselves in the situation of the customer and answer the same questions, to identify specific (un)satisfying aspects about their organisation (Zeithaml et al., 2009:150).

This technique is well suited to assessing customer perceptions from various cultures because it allows respondents to share their perceptions rather than answer pre-determined researcher-defined questions which limit their responses and often ask leading questions (Zeithaml et al., 2009:150). This approach could be useful in the SA service delivery context as service delivery takes place in a multi-cultural environment. Customer fieldwork, for which

a small sample of people from a particular social grouping is selected for the purposes of observation and participant observation in the natural environment of the observed group of people, may be employed alongside critical incident studies (Cant et al., 2002:52).

e) Focus group discussions and service reviews

Both tools have the advantage that they provide specific insights on potential service improvements and ideas and enable excellent learning opportunities (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:415). Service reviews are in-depth one-on-one interviews which are conducted annually with the most valuable customers or users of an organisation (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:415). During focus group sessions (another form of fieldwork research) a senior executive of the organisation visits customers and discuss progress as well as goals (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:415). The senior person will then report the findings back to the various managers, and they will then draw up a response to the client detailing the organisation's response to the customers' expressed need (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:415).

The fact that these reviews are exclusive to the most valuable customers only, makes this tool unpractical for the public sector as it resists the notion of treating customers differently, as mentioned earlier (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:18). Service reviews mainly focus on retaining customers and promoting loyalty. Clients in the public sector have very few alternatives to government services, as mentioned previously, and the application of loyalty in the case of certain services, especially the involuntary services (i.e. welfare), is inappropriate (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:18).

f) Relationship and SERVQUAL surveys

Relationship surveys pose questions about all elements in the customer's relationship with the company. This includes service, product, and price (Zeithaml et al., 2009:151). The approach is comprehensive and assists in diagnosing the relationship strengths and weaknesses of the organisation (Zeithaml et al., 2009:151). Relationship surveys typically monitor and track service performance on an annual basis, and are able to compare the performance of an organisation with that of its competitors (Zeithaml et al., 2009:151).

Measuring service quality can be challenging as it is abstract is best captured by surveys that quantify customer assessments of service, such as the SERVQUAL survey (Zeithaml et al., 2009:151). The SERVQUAL scale involves a survey containing 21 service attributes grouped into five quality dimensions of service, i.e. reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles, as previously discussed (Zeithaml et al., 2009:151). The survey occasionally requires customers to provide two different ratings on each attribute – one reflecting level of

service they would expect from excellent companies in a sector and the other reflecting their perception of the service delivered by a specific company within that sector (Zeithaml et al., 2009:151). The difference between the expectation and the perception rating constitutes a quantified measure of service delivery (Zeithaml et al., 2009:151).

There are limitations to SERVQUAL, however; the instrument has been criticised in that it mainly measures two factors: intrinsic service quality (or functional quality) and extrinsic service quality (or technical quality) which include the tangible aspects of service delivery (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:430). Another point of criticism involves the need to adjust the dimensions and measures to suit the research context – for this reason the majority of researchers using SERVQUAL omit from or add to, or change the list of statements (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:430). As discussed before in this research when the service dimensions were compared to the Batho Pele principles, the Batho Pele principles include two additional principles that reflect the unique nature of the public domain but are not covered by the service dimensions. Opponents to the SERVQUAL instrument claim that the survey is too lengthy and the questions become repetitive – adding two additional dimensions to a questionnaire will make it even lengthier, though, which is an aspect that needs to be carefully managed by public practitioners (Hoffman & Bateson, 2006: 348).

g) After-sales (post transaction) surveys

The purpose of these surveys is to capture information about key service encounters with the customer, unlike the above-mentioned SERVQUAL surveys where the focus is on ascertaining the overall relationship with the customer (Zeithaml et al., 2009:154). Although after-sales surveys are also able identify areas of improvement, it is a more pro-active approach to assessing customer satisfaction than soliciting complaints is (Hoffman & Bateson, 2006: 351). Few customers will take action and complain and waiting for a complaint before taking action deprives the service organisation of (a) valuable feedback for improvement; and (b) decreases time to respond to and address service failures (Hoffman & Bateson, 2006: 351).

A benefit of post transaction surveys is that, it creates the appearance among customers that the call is following up to ensure that they are satisfied, whilst the call, in reality, does double duty as a listening tool for the service organisation (Zeithaml et al., 2009:155). Although this type of survey is focused on individual contact, it can be employed in the public domain where citizens require communication with Government regarding public services (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54).

h) Employee surveys

Employee surveys provide an internal measure of service quality concerning the morale; attitudes and perceived obstacles to service provision (Hoffman & Bateson, 2006: 353). This type of survey provides the means to uncover service-related obstacles caused by internal regulations and policies which prevent employees (as internal clients) from performing optimally and rendering quality service (Hoffman & Bateson, 2006:353). Employee surveys are therefore well suited to provide internal information regarding service quality problems (Hoffman & Bateson, 2006: 353).

i) Mystery shopping

Another method of determining service quality internally is mystery shopping for measuring employee service behaviour (Hoffman & Bateson, 2006:353). Mystery shopping entails trained personnel posing as mystery shoppers who evaluate individual employees on a number of characteristics (i.e. eye contact, appearance, response time, etc.) during actual service encounters (Hoffman & Bateson, 2006:352-353). It constitutes a form of observation research and repeating it quite regularly is recommended — on a quarterly basis (Hoffman & Bateson, 2006:353). Results from mystery shopping are used as constructive employee feedback (Hoffman & Bateson, 2006:353) and is often employed to determine whether frontline staff are displaying desired behaviours (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:414). The disadvantage of this method is that no individual survey is representative because the number of mystery calls or visits is relatively small (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:414).

j) Market oriented ethnography

Market oriented ethnography approaches are based upon observation and allow researchers to observe consumption behaviour in natural settings with the objective of entering the consumer's world and observing how and when a service is consumed in an actual home environment (Zeithaml et al., 2009:156). This enables the service organisation to better understand how customers of other cultures assess and use services (Zeithaml et al., 2009:156). Observation, interviews, documents and examination of material possessions are amongst the techniques that can be applied. As stated before, in a multi-cultural society like that of SA, such an approach could be useful to Local Government as it provides an improved understanding of customer consumption patterns and habits regarding a service (Zeithaml et al., 2009:156).

k) Future expectations research

Future expectations research refers to the future requirements and expectations of customers (Zeithaml et al., 2009:158-159). It may include various approaches, such as (a) features

research' which involves environmental scanning and questioning customers regarding desirable features of possible future services; (b) lead user research by which customers who are innovators are asked to analyse current services and identify the shortfalls in existing services or products; and (c) synectics, which refer to a problem-solving technique (Zeithaml et al., 2009:158-159). All of these approaches seek to promote creative thinking, typically among small groups of people of diverse expertise (Zeithaml et al., 2009:158-159).

l) Lost customer research

This involves deliberately seeking out customers who have stopped using the organisation's service to inquire about their reasons for leaving by using open-ended, in-depth questions to expose the reasons for dissatisfaction. Benefits of this type of research include that it aids in identifying common service failure points and patterns and in this way, serves as an early detection system (Zeithaml et al., 2009:158).

This listening method is not very suitable for the public sector, because of the monopolistic nature of collective (or public) services (Gildenhuis & Knipe, 2000:58). There will therefore be no loss in customers from a consumption point of view, but institutional trust will decline when they are very dissatisfied with government service delivery, which often leads to a change in voting behaviour (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:58-59). The absence of disillusioned and disgruntled citizens at the voting stations for the Local Government elections in March 2006 (Business Day, 2006) because of poor service delivery performance by Government emphasises the observation that low levels of satisfaction with collective services leads to poor turnout at polling station due to a lack of institutional trust (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:58-59).

m) Service quality information systems

This refers to a continuous research process whereby data are provided to managers who utilise it for decision-making purposes (Hoffman & Bateson, 2006:349). The information systems utilise service quality and customer satisfaction measures in combination with other measures obtained at various points to assess the firm's overall performance (Hoffman & Bateson, 2006:349). It utilises the customer's as well as the employee's perspectives of the organisation, and also examines competitor service performance and therefore serves as a basis for comparison (Hoffman & Bateson, 2006: 350).

n) Focus group interviews

These interviews constitute informal discussions with 8-12 customers facilitated by a trained moderator. Participants are encouraged to express their views and to comment on the

suggestions made by others in the group (Hoffman & Bateson, 2006:352). Although this is a rich source of data representing customer opinions, the primary purpose is to identify areas of information to be collected in subsequent survey research – customer focus groups therefore represent the beginning of a process and requires further intervention in order to confirm that the ideas expressed by the focus group reflect the sentiments of the broader segment of customers (Hoffman & Bateson, 2006:352-352).

In the previously discussed case example regarding the City of Tshwane, focus groups discussions were conducted before the actual survey took place, and provided useful information for the development of the survey questionnaire and subsequent interpretation of the findings (Roefs et al., 2006:15).

o) Service expectations meetings

This initiative involves eliciting the expectations of the client at a specified time of the year and annual following up to determine whether the expectations have been met (Zeithaml et al., 2009:155). Unlike other forms of research discussed previously, e.g. focus group research, expectations meetings are not conducted by an objective unbiased facilitator but by senior members from within the organisation delivering the service (Zeithaml et al., 2009:155). After obtaining the input, senior members return to their teams and plan goals centred on client requirements for the next financial year (Zeithaml et al., 2009:156). The account plan is subsequently verified with the client to ascertain whether the client's expectations were correctly captured and internalised in the plan (Zeithaml et al., 2009:156). After executing the plan for the year, the senior personnel return to the client to determine whether the plan had been executed successfully and to establish a new set of expectations for the coming year (Zeithaml et al., 2009:156).

p) Process check point evaluations

Long-term services present the challenge that it is difficult to collect customer information because it is undesirable to wait until the entire project is completed since many unresolved issues may occur in the meantime (Zeithaml et al., 2009:156). In such a scenario it is advisable to develop delivery process and to structure feedback around the process, but checking in at frequent points to ensure that client's expectations are met (Zeithaml et al., 2009:156).

q) Customer panels

Customer panels offer the service organisation regular and timely customer information, and essentially consist of groups of customers who are assembled with the purpose of providing attitudes and perceptions regarding a service over a time period (Zeithaml et al., 2009:158).

Customer panels could be useful for the public sector because they can be applied in such a way as to represent lost segments of customers (Zeithaml et al., 2009:158).

r) Upward communication

Upward communication becomes pertinent with large organisations where direct contact between managers/ owners and the customer is limited and the opportunity to gain first-hand knowledge of customer expectations and perceptions has to be structured and planned (Zeithaml et al., 2009:165). The objectives for upward communication include gaining first-hand knowledge about customers; improving internal service quality; gaining first-hand knowledge of employees and obtaining ideas for service improvement (Zeithaml et al., 2009:166).

There are several approaches to upward communication namely executive visits to customers (or for Local Government, Mayor and Mayoral committee visits to citizens); executive management listening to customers (or municipal manager and the executive team visits citizens in the case of Local Government); research on intermediate customers such as contact employees and distributors; research on internal customers; executive or management listening to employees (or municipal manager listening to Local Government employees as far as Local Government is concerned); and employee suggestions (Zeithaml et al., 2009:167-168). These approaches enable management to obtain and use information from customers and contact employees (Zeithaml et al., 2009:170).

5.3.1.2. Analysis, reporting and dissemination of customer feedback

A reporting system needs to transfer feedback and its analysis to frontline staff, top management and branch or department managers in order to promote continuous service improvement (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:416). The feedback loop with frontline personnel should be immediate (e.g. a daily update) but the following types of service performance reports are recommended in addition to that: a monthly service performance update which provides feedback on customer comments and operational process performance; a quarterly service performance review which provides trends in performance and service quality; and an annual service performance report providing an assessment of the status and long-term trends relating to customer satisfaction and services (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:416).

As mentioned previously, the SDBIP's, are strategic financial management tools that produce quarterly service delivery targets which are reported to (a) facilitate oversight in terms of fiscal and non-fiscal performance of the municipality; and (b) ensure the implementation of the IDP (c.f. 3.3) (Ethekwini Municipality, 2009:1). It involves tracing the flow of allocated public resources (i.e. monetary budget allocations) and strives to assist government to ensure that public resources reach their intended recipients (Malena, 2012:1). In this way, department managers in Local Government are provided with service delivery trends on a quarterly basis. Table 5-26 below presents a summary of the strengths and weaknesses of a selection of the key feedback collection methods, as discussed above.

Table 5-26: Strengths and weaknesses of key customer feedback collection tools

| Method | Level of Measurement | | Transaction Specific | Actionable | Representative/ Reliable | Potential for service recovery | First-hand learning | Cost effective |
|---------------------------|----------------------|---------|----------------------|------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| | Firm | Process | | | | | | |
| Total market survey | | | | | | | | |
| Annual survey | | | | | | | | |
| Post transactional survey | | | | | | | | |
| Feedback cards | | | | | | | | |
| Mystery shopping | | | | | | | | |
| Complaint solicitation | | | | | | | | |
| Focus groups | | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Service reviews | | | | | | | | |
| Lost customer | | | | | | | | |
| Process check point | | | | | | | | |
| Market oriented ethnography | | | | | | | | |
| Future expectations | | | | | | | | |

Sources: Adapted from Lovelock & Wirtz (2011:413); Zeithaml et al (2009:147-159); Hoffman and Bateson (2006: 351–354)

Legend:

| | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| | Hardly meets requirement(s) at all |
| | Meets requirement(s) partially |
| | Meets requirement(s) fully |

The listening methods provide various options to the service organisation that chooses to embark on a research initiative to establish its customers' expectations, perceptions, actual behaviour, and behavioural intentions in an effort to close their listening gap (Zeithaml et al., 2009:142). The methods are also very different in nature and enable decision makers to make informed decisions based on numbers for statistical validity, as well as perspective and sensitivity for insight and meaning (Zeithaml et al., 2009:142-143). The frequency with which certain methods can be repeated also varies, which makes it possible to ensure that listening to customers occurs with appropriate frequency (Zeithaml et al., 2009:142-143).

Another point of differentiation between the methods is their costliness – it is important for decision makers to balance the cost of research with the value of the information as some options are more expensive than others (Zeithaml et al., 2009:142-143). It therefore becomes imperative that a combination of methods is used because of the various strengths, weaknesses and applications of the available methods in jointly producing the necessary information (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:412).

5.3.1.3. Gap-closing strategies

Zeithaml et al. (2009:173, 211) propose two main strategies for closing or narrowing this gap, namely relationship building and service recovery. In terms of relationship building, customer satisfaction leads to loyalty or continued patronage (as previously discussed) but loyalty goes beyond satisfaction –satisfaction is a temporary post purchase state (as previously mentioned) that reflects how the service (or product) has fulfilled its purpose (Arnould et al., 2004:783). The main purpose of promoting relationship building between a provider and a consumer is to maintain a base of committed or loyal customers who are profitable for the organisation (Zeithaml et al., 2009:182). Loyalty or continued patronage constitutes a deeply held commitment to rebuy a preferred service (or product) consistently in the future and includes both readiness to repeatedly purchase and resistance to other service alternatives (Arnould et al., 2004:783).

Organisations can offer loyal or committed customers several benefits, e.g. a French grocery chain arranged for loyal customers to opt in to receiving e-mail notices of special recipes and price promotions (Arnould et al., 2004:759). With continued patronage consumers also experience greater confidence and reduced anxiety through knowing what to expect, and over time develop a social relationship and familiarity with their service providers. For organisations, the benefit of continued patronage lies in higher overall returns and increased purchases over time (Zeithaml et al., 2009:184).

Loyalty therefore constitutes a substitute for profitability (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:19). As stated earlier, in 2.3.1 this research report, citizens as clients of government have very few (if any) services alternatives and the application of loyalty seems unreasonable due to the monopolistic nature of public services (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:18-19). The public sector is unable to reward citizens for continued patronage as it is based on the principles of equity and due process, which prohibits it from treating citizens inequitably by providing different levels of the same service (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:18-19), as mentioned before.

Service recovery refers to the actions taken by an organisation in response to a service failure, which generally encompasses service performance that falls below service expectations in a manner that leads to service dissatisfaction (Zeithaml et al., 2009:212). The aim of service recovery is to respond to the complaint in a manner that leads to customer satisfaction and goodwill (Hoffman & Bateson. 2006:572).

As mentioned before, frontline employees play a crucial role in the context of the service organisation and its customers. The service levels delivered by employees working in customer-facing jobs can be an important source of differentiation (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:302), especially in terms of party politics and institutional trust as far as public services are concerned (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:58). Evidence suggests that the performance of government and its ability to distribute services to citizens is a critical factor explaining dwindling institutional trust (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:58). Institutional trust, or the trustworthiness that citizens ascribe to Government or politicians, is significant because it influences citizen behaviour in terms of political activeness; voting patterns; support for institutional or policy reforms; and compliance with political authorities (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:58). This links to the quality dimension of credibility (i.e. the trustworthiness or honesty of the service provider, as previously mentioned (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:421).

From a customer's perspective, the encounter with service staff is an important aspect of the service itself and service staff is expected to be quick and efficient in executing operational tasks as well as being courteous and helpful (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:302). The Batho Pele principles also address this point and provide guidance on the conduct of service staff by stipulating that they have to be courteous and treat all people [citizens] with respect (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54), which refers to the requirement that public servants should treat members of the public as "customers who are entitled to receive the highest standards of service" (Republic of South Africa. 1997:18).

Unfortunately, the Batho Pele principles remain silent about frontline staff having to be efficient and effective in executing operational tasks which, as discussed previously, is another important aspect of frontline service delivery (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:302). The service dimension of reliability specifies the ability to perform the promised service on the part of service delivery staff, as well as competence, or the possession of the skills and knowledge required to perform the service (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:407). Reliability and competence are not addressed in the Batho Pele principles; it is merely required in section 4.4.1 which states that public servants and official act with courtesy and that their behaviour is raised to the level of the best (Republic of South Africa, 1997:18). This is a significant omission that diminishes the role of public servants and officials and fails to provide guidance to empower them to not only appear resourceful, efficient and in control, but also to act accordingly.

The Batho Pele principles address service recovery by including the principle of redress, which has to do with how quickly complaints are responded to, actioned and resolved (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54). When a service failure occurs, the faster the service provider responds,

the more likely it is that the recovery effort will result in a successful outcome (Hoffman & Bateson, 2006:372).

Previous research has concurred that the service provider is likely to retain 95 percent of its unhappy users if a complaint is handled promptly, whereas the service provider tends to retain only 64 percent of unhappy customers if the complaint is resolved in a less timely manner (Hoffman & Bateson, 2006:372). Time is of the essence and the faster the service provider responds to the problem, the better the message to its users about the value that the service provider places on pleasing those who make use of its services (Hoffman & Bateson, 2006:372). During the South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) it was found that more than half of the participants in the survey disagreed with the suggestion that Local Government responds rapidly to service failures and 54 percent indicated disagreement with the implementation of the principle of redress, 29 percent of the respondents felt that municipal responsiveness or redress was evident, whilst the remaining 17 percent did not respond (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54, 55).

The main concern of the public sector about “retaining” citizens as customers or pleasing them relates to institutional trust, as discussed previously, and not necessarily to the usage of public services. Confidence in Government and political parties is largely dependent on how services are rendered and the way in which service issues are resolved, as illustrated by Roberts and Hemson’s study (2008:61, 62). This particular study which found that participants who are particularly disadvantaged (such as people living in informal settlements or in rural areas) and who receive particularly low levels of service (which was indicated by the relatively low levels of agreement with the implementation of the Batho Pele principles) have the lowest level of conviction that Local Government will act in their interests (Roberts and Hemson 2008:61, 62). Developing good service recovery skills is important due to what is termed the service recovery paradox, which refers to the situation in which the customer rates performance higher if a failure occurs and the service personnel recover from it successfully than if the service had been delivered correctly in the first place (Hoffman & Bateson, 2006:371).

Lovelock and Wirtz (2011:410) proposed a few solutions in terms of the knowledge or listening gap which firstly entails the improvement of market research procedures, including questionnaires and interview design, sampling, field implementation, and repeat research studies. Secondly, the implementation of effective customer feedback that includes satisfaction research; complaint content analysis; and customer panels was suggested (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:410). This ties in with the previously discussed solution of service recovery as discussed by Zeithaml et al. (2009:212-215). Increased interaction between

customers and management was introduced as a third possible solution to address this gap (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:410), which agrees with the improved upward communication approach suggested by Zeithaml et al. (2009:165-168). It includes upward communication as a key listening tool enabling owners or managers to be in contact with customers and thereby gain first-hand knowledge of customer expectations and perceptions (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:410).

Lastly, the facilitation of communication between front-line employees and management should be included as part of any strategy to narrow the knowledge gap (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:410). As mentioned before, the frontline personnel are important for both the customers and the service organisation (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:302) and regular communication with management may address internal knowledge shortfalls.

5.3.1.4. Monitoring & evaluation techniques

The application of monitoring and evaluation techniques is necessary when measuring the service delivery results and is a vital part of service improvement (Civicus & PG Exchange, 2012:2). It completes the accountability loop and provides insights that will guide future efforts in terms of service improvement (Republic of South Africa, 1997). The Batho Pele White Paper prescribes a monitoring and evaluation phase as part of the strategy aimed at service improvement, but failed to specify any oversight methods (Republic of South Africa, 1997).

The White Paper requires that the monitoring of services should take place in section 7.2.10; it also highlights the importance of establishing whether or not services have met the set standards (Republic of South Africa, 1997). PME methods (which enable the oversight of service delivery implementation and improvement) are well-suited to the monitoring of the implementation of gap-closing strategies in the public sector. PME tools incorporate citizens' service perceptions and evaluations, and is able to link them to the quality gap areas.

Currently, the available PME methods do not provide adequately for oversight with regard to frontline or contact employees. Stakeholder surveys can be applied to obtain a service quality feedback from both external (and internal) stakeholders (Sadashiva, 2012:2-5), but an in-depth analysis of the performance of frontline employees is not possible because it is not exclusively focused on these employees. Citizen report cards are useful when dealing with service recovery for the reason that it is able to solicit user feedback regarding the service quality and performance (Pekkonen, 2012: 1- 5), but it, once again, is general quality feedback as opposed to feedback relating to frontline performance specifically.

The FSDM operational programme presents a more effective option for monitoring and evaluation relating to frontline public sector personnel (Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation, 2015:7). As mentioned before, the programme monitors the quality of service delivery at selected service sites through unannounced site monitoring visits (Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation, 2015:7) similar to mystery shopping, as discussed in 2.3.4 above, on page 79 of this research document. The most significant contribution of this programme is that it has developed its own set of performance quality measures such as dignified treatment; cleanliness and comfort; safety; opening and closing times; as well as a complaints and compliments management system (Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation, 2015:7-8).

The following part of the discussion will the focus is on the second type of service quality shortcoming, namely that of service design.

5.3.2. The Policy or Service Design Gap

This gap pertains to the difference between management's understanding of customer expectations and the quality standards established for service delivery (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:406). It is referred to as the policy gap because management made a policy decision not to deliver what they think customers expect and management therefore sets standards below customer expectations due to cost and feasibility considerations (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:406).

The presence of service designs and performance standards which accurately reflect the perceptions of customers is another key requirement for quality service delivery. Translating customer expectations into service quality specifications that employees can understand and execute is the challenge involved in this gap area (Zeithaml et al., 2009:36). The service standards that are involved must also be what is referred to as customer driven which is different from conventional performance standards in the sense that they are based on key user requirements that are visible to and measured by users and therefore constitute operations standards set to correspond to user priorities rather than to organisational concerns (Zeithaml et al., 2009:36).

There are several reasons for this gap. They include the belief that user expectations are unrealistic; and the belief that the variability inherent in the service defies standardisation and setting standards will not achieve the desired goal (Zeithaml et al., 2009:36-37). In the research conducted by the HSRC as mentioned before, participants in the survey showed the least disagreement with the Batho Pele statements relating to setting service standards in Local Government (38 percent) and increasing access to public services (35 percent), which means overall that respondents perceive that these two principles are duly implemented during service delivery (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54, 55). This contradicts the findings regarding the principle of consultation which indicated that there is strong disagreement (69 percent) about the application of consultation, which refers to local municipalities consulting citizens adequately regarding basic services (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54; 55).

Consultation could be considered alongside openness and transparency as well as providing information because all are related communication; and all of them scored lowly during the SASAS case example (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54-55). There also appears to be generally low levels of agreement about these communication aspects being in place (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54-55). This contradiction suggests that participants felt that service standards were citizen-driven and fairly accessible to all citizens whilst simultaneously harbouring doubts that they as citizens had been consulted sufficiently (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54-55). It also

casts doubt on Local Government's service designs and standards and whether they truly reflect the perceptions of SA citizens. This could be indicative of the fact there is a problem as far as the translation of citizen expectations into service quality specifications are concerned (Zeithaml et al., 2009:36).

5.3.2.1. Gap-closing strategies

Several options may be employed to narrow this type of service quality shortfall which includes customer-defined standards; service innovation; and physical evidence or tangibles of service delivery. Zeithaml et al. (2009:283) propose that customer-defined service standards could be employed to narrow the service design and standards gap. This means that the customer's meaning or interpretation of a standard should be considered (Zeithaml et al., 2009:289). Customer-defined standards can be classified into three categories, namely "hard" or "soft" (as mentioned before) and may include "one-time fixes" whereby policy, procedural and technological changes are implemented to address customer requirements (Zeithaml et al., 2009:289, 292).

The focus on customers and their perspective on service standards forms the key reason why consultation is a key quality dimension that must be satisfied in order to close this gap (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54). Customers need to be talked to in order to gain their opinions, perceptions and views on what will contribute to a satisfying service experience (Zeithaml et al., 2009:292). The customer-defined approach also ensures that community needs are responded to, and that projects are based on a clear understanding and prioritising of citizens' needs (CPSI, 2004:9). In return, higher payment levels and greater buy-in and support from communities are obtained, which really improves satisfaction with services and overall service quality (CPSI, 2004:9).

Lovelock and Wirtz (2011:410) concur with the above and suggest that measurable customer-oriented service standards should be established; communicated and reinforced. The service quality goals should be set for each step of the service delivery process and should also be challenging yet realistic and explicitly designed to meet customer expectations (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:410). It is important that employees accept these set quality goals and standards in order to implement them successfully (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:410).

During the case example analysis (refer to 4.3 on page 125 of this document), it was found that citizens expressed their satisfaction with waste removal when the "hard" measures or service standard indicated that the level of service quality was in fact quite low (Roefs et al.,

2006:18;31). This is an example of an instance where the customer was not adequately consulted in terms of what the service standard (or the service design) should be to improve customer satisfaction (Zeithaml et al., 2009:292). The Batho Pele White Paper specified that customers and potential customers must know and understand what level and quality of service they can expect to receive, and what recourse they have if the standard is not met (Republic of South Africa, 1997).

Another strategy to narrow the policy or service design gap includes new service development processes or innovation which can vary from minor style changes to radical changes (Zeithaml et al., 2009:253). Major or radical innovations involve one new type of service development where both the service and the market(s) are new - with this type of innovation the product often creates the market (Zeithaml et al., 2009:254). Start-up businesses comprise another type of innovation through which new services are created for a market that is already served by existing products that meet the same generic needs (Zeithaml et al., 2009:254). The innovation of new services for the currently served market presents a “new” service previously offered by another organisation, for the first time to its existing customers, i.e. the service is new to the customer group but has existed before at another organisation (Zeithaml et al., 2009:255).

Service line extensions involve another type of innovation and represent expansion of the existing service line. Service improvements represent a type of innovation type in changes introduced in the features of existing services such as extended hours of service (Zeithaml et al., 2009:255). Style changes represent the subtlest form of service innovation and involve highly visible changes such as a change in the décor or colour scheme (Zeithaml et al., 2009:256). This type of innovation plays on the emotions; perceptions and attitudes of the customer (Zeithaml et al., 2009:256).

Due to increased pressure on Government to raise the pace and quality of public service delivery, there is an urgent need for municipalities to find and learn innovative ways of distributing public services (CPSI, 2004:2). The Special Municipal Infrastructure Fund (SMIF) has been established to encourage and support innovative initiatives in support of municipal infrastructural projects, and represent one way in which municipalities can access support for innovative projects (CPSI, 2004:2). The fund facilitates knowledge sharing across projects to enable successful innovations to be replicated and policy and procedures to be informed (CPSI, 2004:2). In an effort to spread innovation, the Centre for Public Service Innovation (CPSI) identifies project ideas and good-practice case examples, which can be adapted for

other geographic areas (CPSI, 2004:2). This initiative aims at motivating and rewarding public sector innovation.

Instead of new service development, Lovelock and Wirtz (2011:410) proposed the development of tiered service products to meet customer expectations. This proposition is not plausible for the public sector as the principle of equity and due process prevents public organisations to differentiate between customers by rendering different levels in quality of the same service(s) to various citizens (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:18-19), as mentioned before. This position is reiterated by the Constitution in section 195(1)(b), which requires that services must be provided impartially, fairly, equitably and without bias (Republic of South Africa, 1996). The Batho Pele White Paper also supports this position, and section 1.2.5 of the White Paper declares that one of the objectives of service delivery is equity bias (Republic of South Africa, 1997).

However, citizens' expectations have reflected various service preferences, e.g. a water tap nearer to their dwelling that can be shared amongst a few families as opposed to a more expensive water connection for each family (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:56). Meeting this expectation does not constitute service differentiation in but merely reflects choice in terms of a service – something to which all citizens are entitled.

The improvement of physical evidence and tangible cues relating to service delivery is yet another avenue to explore in the quest towards closing the service design gap (Zeithaml et al., 2009:313). Customers often rely on such tangible aspects to assess their satisfaction with the service during and after service delivery. It is believed that the effective design of physical, tangible service delivery evidence is key in closing this particular gap and demonstrating that the customer's views have indeed been taken into account (Zeithaml et al., 2009:313). Generally known aspects of physical elements include facility exteriors (e.g. design, signage and parking); facility interiors (e.g. design, equipment, layout, air quality/ temperature, sound); business cards; billing statements; brochures; web pages; and virtual landscape.

Physical evidence of the service influences the service experience; the meaning that customers attach to the service experience; their satisfaction with the service; and their emotional connection(s) with the organisation rendering the service (Zeithaml et al., 2009: 315). In this argument the focus is on the emotional component of customers' service experience, and the strategic impact of physical space and tangibles in creating such an experience should be acknowledged (Zeithaml et al., 2009:336-337).

Instead of focusing on the physical evidence of service delivery, Lovelock and Wirtz places greater emphasis on service processes and getting service process in place to address the policy or service design gap (2011:410). They propose that a rigorous, systematic and customer-centric process for designing and redesigning the customer service process should be implemented, and repetitive work tasks should be standardised (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2011:410). This is a more practical solution for the public sector with the focus on systems improvement. It is also more in line with the Batho Pele White Paper's insistence (in section 1.2.1) that government institutions must optimise access to their services within the context of fiscal constraints and the fulfilment of competing needs, and that the objectives of service delivery should include welfare, equity and efficiency (Republic of South Africa, 1997).

A key objective of the SA public service administration is to search for ways to simplify procedures and eliminate waste and inefficiency by identifying areas where efficiency savings can be sought, as stated in subsection 4.8.2 (Republic of South Africa, 1997). Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR), Government's macro-economic strategy, also requires reduction in unnecessary government consumption and the release of resources for productive investment and their redirection to areas of greatest need (Republic of South Africa, 1997). For these reasons the principle of value for money (section 4.8) is important as a quality dimension when dealing with the public sector and should be adhered to. In line with the aforementioned objectives and values, public organisations should be mindful when planning physical evidence endeavours, bearing in mind that it is more important that the citizen receives the best possible value (Republic of South Africa, 1997).

5.3.2.2. Monitoring and evaluation

PME method that is most suitable for the service design gap is the citizen charter method (Post et al., 2011:3, 12) because it supports both the supply of and the demand for effective service delivery. It consists of public contracts between citizens and public sector service providers that clearly explain the service expectations as well as the expected service standards, and also monitors the effectiveness of implementation (Post et al., 2011:3,12).

In the next section, the third type of service quality shortcoming relating to actual service delivery or performance will be addressed.

5.3.3. The Service Performance or Delivery Gap

Lovelock and Wirtz describe this gap as the difference between service delivery standards and the actual performance of the delivery teams (2011:406). As discussed previously in 1.1

of this research document, the instance of SA government officials paying themselves significant salaries and bonuses despite the fact that they are failing to deliver services and failing to satisfy citizens' need for basic services is an example of the service delivery gap (Cape Times, 2006).

5.3.3.1. Gap-closing strategies

Strategies for addressing this gap relate to the human resources function of an organisation and involve four areas: (a) hiring the most suitable employees; (b) developing employees to deliver quality service; (c) providing needed support systems; and (d) retaining the best employees (Zeithaml et al., 2009:361). Lovelock and Wirtz combined the first two areas, i.e. (a) and (b), in their approach to narrowing this gap, and simply refer to it as the assurance that customer service teams are motivated and able to meet the required service standards (2011:410). they further include aspects such as improved recruitment procedures focusing on employee-job fit; selection (or hiring) based on service competencies as well as the possession of abilities and skills needed to perform the job (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:410).

Zeithaml et al. (2009:361) incorporated aspects aimed at the service organisation itself, such as striving to be the preferred employer and competing for the best staff, which is also crucial to service quality and to bridging this gap. Both sets of authors suggested (i) the development of employees to deliver service quality which includes training for technical and interactive skills); (ii) building cross-functional service teams for improved service delivery and problem resolution; and (iii) giving more decision-making power to employees (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:410; Zeithaml et al., 2009:361).

Lovelock and Wirtz (2011:410) stressed the importance of performance evaluation and the need to provide regular performance feedback, as well as rewarding customer service team performance and individual employees on attaining quality goals. Zeithaml et al. (2009:361) refer to the measurement of internal service quality as the provision of support systems to enhance performance.

Both sets of authors agree on what Zeithaml et al. (2009:361) refer to as the provision of needed support systems. This includes the installation of the most appropriate technology, equipment, internal support processes to assist front-line or customer-facing personnel, and balancing demand against productive capacity in order to obtain improved service quality on an internal level (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:410).

Zeithaml et al. (2009:361) not only promote the employment of the most appropriate employees, i.e. (d), but they also suggest the retention of the best people as another strategy to bridge the service performance or delivery gap and include the measuring and rewarding of exceptional service performers; treating employees like customers; and including employees in the organizational vision.

Lovelock and Wirtz (2011:410), on the other hand, included the management of customers and educating customers to perform their roles and responsibilities during service delivery as part of their approach to address the delivery gap. This is an important aspect in terms of remedying the gap and is directly linked to the quality dimension of providing good information to citizens which will assist in understanding the service and managing service expectations (Republic of South Africa, 1997).

5.3.3.2. Monitoring and evaluation

The participative monitoring and evaluation approaches which are most suitable for this gap area include community scorecards and social audits (as discussed in 2.4.1 on page 83 of this research document). Through the scorecard method mechanisms for direct feedback between citizens and the public sector service providers are created and most importantly performance criteria are generated (Pekkonen, 2012:1-4). This is significant as it supports the gap-closing strategies which are mainly focused on human resources processes such as recruitment and selection as well as staff retention (Zeithaml et al., 2009:361). As mentioned before, social audits supplement traditional financial audits to assist government in evaluating overall performance which will serve the purposes of this particular oversight exercise well because the performance of appointed staff will be addressed (Pekkonen & Sadashiva, 2012: 1-5).

The communication gap constitutes the fourth quality gap, which will be investigated in the next section.

5.3.4. Communication Gap

This gap constitutes the difference between what the service organisation communicates and what it actually delivers (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:407). An example of the communication gap is seen in local residents across South Africa staging demonstrations and calling on the National ANC Government to deliver on promises made when it was voted into power a number of years ago (Business Day, 2009b). Such action illustrates the gap between what was promised by government to customers and what they have received in terms of public (or basic) services.

The communication gap comprises two sub-gaps namely the internal communications sub-gap and the overpromise sub-gap (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:407). The internal communications sub-gap refers to the difference between what the organisation's advertising and sales personnel perceive of the (service) product's features, performance; and quality and what the service organisation can deliver. The overpromise sub-gap may be caused by overpromising in advertising and sales personnel based on assessments of the sales they have generated (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:407).

5.3.4.1. Gap-closing strategies

To address the internal communications gap, Lovelock and Wirtz (2011:411) suggest that service organisations should ensure that communicate promises are realistic and correctly interpreted by customers. They continue to advise that managers should be educated about the operational capabilities of services which include the following points: (a) seeking inputs from the front-line and operations staff when developing new communication programmes; (b) allowing service providers to preview communications before exposing customers to it; (c) persuading sales staff to involve operations staff in face-to-face meetings with customers; and (d) developing internal educational and motivational advertising campaigns to standardise service delivery across the various locations and to strengthen understanding as well as integration among the internal organizational functions (which include marketing, operations, and human resources) (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:411).

In an attempt to address the overpromise gap, it has been suggested that service organisations should be specific when they make promises and that they manage customers' understanding of communication content by: (a) the pre-testing of advertising, brochures, telephonic scripts, and website content prior to external release to see if the target audience(s) interpret information as intended by the service firm (and if not, to revise and retest; (b) the

identification and explanation in real time of the reasons for shortcomings in service performance and highlighting the factors beyond the control of the firm; and (c) the documentation of tasks and performance guarantees included in an agreement before commencement of the service and explaining the work upon completion of such service performed (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:411).

The approach to bridging the communication gap relates closely to coordinating marketing service communication (Zeithaml et al., 2009: 479), whereas Lovelock and Wirtz tended to focus on a two-pronged approach including focusing on internal communication and customer understanding of communication content (2011:411). Addressing service intangibility is an important part of this approach (Zeithaml et al., 2009:486-494). In order to achieve this, different options are available e.g. the use of narrative to demonstrate the service experience; the presentation of vivid information; or the use association, physical representation; documentation and visualization (Zeithaml et al., 2009:486-494). The management of service promises are key and the coordination of external communication (Zeithaml et al., 2009:494-498).

Managing customers' expectations by making realistic promises; offering choices to customers; and communicating the criteria and levels by which customers assess service effectiveness (Zeithaml et al., 2009:499-502). Another way to manage expectation is to create tiered-value service offerings but this is not possible in the public domain as services are the same for everybody and as mentioned before the principles of equity and due process is resistant to the idea of treating government customers inequitably by providing different levels of the same service (Dinsdale & Marson,1999:18), as mentioned previously Constitution Services must be provided impartially, fairly, equitably and without bias (Republic of South Africa,1996).

Managing customer education is also another way of closing this gap effectiveness (Zeithaml et al., 2009:502). This is achieved through preparing customers for the service process, confirming performance to standards and expectations, clarifying expectations after the sale and teaching customers to seek out slow demand time periods for effectiveness (Zeithaml et al., 2009:502-504). Finally, managing internal marketing communication (vertical and horizontal) is a key step in the process to match service performance with service design and – standards (Zeithaml et al., 2009:504). This entails creating cross-functional teams; vertical communication; and effective upward communication (Zeithaml et al., 2009:504-507).

5.3.4.2. Monitoring and evaluation

The community monitoring and evaluative approach to PME is suggested for monitoring the communication quality gap – this method relies on citizen inputs to gather specific society-based promises made by political candidates (McDonald, 2012:1). It can be utilised to hold public sector service providers accountable for service promises, to put external pressure on them if they are not performing as promised (McDonald, 2012:1). Community scorecards can be applied to continuously provide service feedback to citizens to ensure that service promises have been kept by providing mechanisms for direct feedback between citizens and the public sector service providers.

Another more effective way of dealing with service delivery promises is formalising expectations in order to clarify promises and to ensure that expectations remain realistic through public agreements, as discussed (Post et al., 2011:3, 12). The citizen charter method of PME operates on this foundation, and monitors government accountability (Post et al., 2011:3, 12). The PME methods serve to prevent politicians from over promising in terms of what they can deliver in their effort to gain votes (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:407). It does not address the internal communication sub-gap meaning what is communicated to politicians by internal officials (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:407).

The fifth gap, namely the perception gap, will be discussed in the following section.

5.3.5. Perception Gap

The perception gap signifies the difference between what has in fact been delivered to the customer, and what the customer perceives that they have received (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:408). The authors pointed out that customers are sometimes unable to accurately evaluate service quality due to a lack of information about the service (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:408).

5.3.5.1. Gap-closing strategies

The general approach to remedying this gap is to make service results concrete and clear, in order to communicate the service quality that is experienced and received (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:411). For complex services, customers can be kept informed during the service delivery process in terms of what is being done and providing debriefing to enable customers to appreciate the quality of service they received (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:411).

Another strategy includes the development of service environments and physical evidence cues that are consistent with the level of service provided. This point has been debated previously, and it was argued that it is expected of public servants and officials to deal responsibly with resources (Republic of South Africa, 1996). Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR), the Government's macro-economic strategy, among other things, calls for reducing unnecessary government consumption and releasing resources for productive investment and their redirection to areas of greatest need (Republic of South Africa, 1997). Civil service should therefore not display extravagant physical evidence and service environments. However, it can aim to provide physical evidence of the service delivered, e.g. printed material and documentaries of success stories about basic services changing the lives of communities.

5.3.5.2. Monitoring and evaluation

Social audits provide an effective way of obtaining citizen perceptions and in that way informing the public sector service provider if there is a problem in terms of the way in which services are perceived (Civicus & PG Exchange, 2012:2). It supplements traditional financial audits to assist government to evaluate overall performance and compare public perceptions and stated core values, as mentioned in 2.4.1 of this research study (Civicus & PG Exchange, 2012:2).

Stakeholder surveys are another monitoring and evaluative method that serves the same purpose (Civicus & PG Exchange, 2012:2). It is quantitative as opposed to social audits which are qualitative by nature (Civicus & PG Exchange, 2012:2). It also involves external stakeholders, which social audits do not (Civicus & PG Exchange, 2012:2).

The next part of the discussion will investigate the final gap, namely the service quality gap. This gap encompasses the other five previously mentioned gaps

5.3.6. Service Quality or Customer Gap

The service quality or customer gap is (as discussed previously) the accumulative effect of the other five quality gaps (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:408). The solution for addressing this particular provider gap, is to consistently address the other five provider gaps (i.e. the listening, policy, service performance, communication- and perception gaps (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:408). Consistent management of all the other provider gaps will assist in closing the service quality gap (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:408).

The next section will focus on the role of development communication in relation to citizen evaluation, with specific reference to PME.

5.4. THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION IN PARTICIPATORY MONITORING AND EVALUATION

As stated in Chapter 2, the inclusion of discussions on political communication is significant because the allocation and distribution of services and resources is as much a political matter as it is a humanistic matter (Swanepoel, 1997:2). As also mentioned before, the advantage of combining PME with development communication is that this specific type of communication includes unique media to effectively reach target citizenry or community groups (Barker, 2001:9-12). This includes community-printed media (for example local newspapers); interactive media (for example community radio); and community online media such as cellular phones (Barker, 2001:9-12). After the application of PME methods, specific communication media are required to effectively transfer information between government and citizens.

Table 5-27 below indicates which communication medium is suitable for communicating the contents with which PME method.

Table 5-27: Development communication methods or media as applied to PME

| | PME Survey types | PET | Citizen Charters | CME Approach |
|---------------------------------|------------------|-----|------------------|--------------|
| Development Communication Media | | | | |
| Publications | X | | | |
| Public Media | X | X | X | |
| Structured Interactive Dialogue | | | X | |
| Electronic Media | X | X | | X |
| Cellular Phones | | | | |

Sources: Development Communication Media (Barker, 2001:9-12); PET (Malena, 2012:14); Community Monitoring and Evaluation (McDonald, 2012:1); Social Audits (Pekkonen & Sadashiva, 2012:1-5); Community Scorecards (Pekkonen, 2012 b:1-4); Citizen Report Cards (Pekkonen, 2012a:1-5); Stakeholder Surveys (Sadashiva, 2012:2-5); Citizen Charters (Post & Agarwal, 2011:3,12)

There are numerous barriers in terms of access to basic services in South Africa, which include geographical location (in terms of remote areas) and the lack of infrastructure which encompasses communication challenges and travelling to remote areas (Republic of South Africa, 1997). Within this context, a service improvement programme should address the disadvantages of the barriers to access and an effort must be made to include the views of those previously excluded (Republic of South Africa, 1997). Development communication methods are ideal and applies methods that are readily available and accessible to the developmental context (Barker, 2001:9-12).

5.5. SERVICE IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

The aim of a service improvement strategy (or gap-closing strategy) is to close the previously mentioned service quality gaps (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:410). The key to closing the customer gap or the “gap-closure” strategy is subject to the following requirements: (a) such a strategy must be anchored in an improved and in-depth understanding of what citizens’ priorities for service really are, as well as (b) a services improvement strategy for the public sector must be developed which will enable the public sector to respond effectively to these identified priorities (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:3). The Batho Pele document reiterated that such a “gap-closure” or “improvement strategy” should be required to accurately identify customers’ needs (Republic of South Africa, 1997). The Batho Pele document continued to state that it is also necessary to include accurate identification of the current service baseline in the strategy, which will enable targets to be set for improvement, taking into account the availability of resources (Republic of South Africa, 1997). These requirements clearly set the scene for the framework for including citizen perceptions in public service delivery, the main objective which this research aimed to achieve. After the diagnostic model has been applied and the service quality problem area(s) have been identified; the public sector organisation is able to proceed to develop its own service quality improvement strategy. Before developing a service quality improvement strategy, it would be useful to examine a few examples.

5.5.1. Strategy 1: White Paper on Transforming Public Service

Section 7.2.3 of the Batho Pele White Paper explained an implementation strategy, for a service delivery improvement plan or programme (Republic of South Africa, 1997). A model format is provided by the Pele White Paper document (Republic of South Africa, 1997) – refer to Annexure A in the Appendixes of this research. The main elements of the Service Delivery Improvement Programme and -Strategy as set out by the Batho Pele White Paper, are explained in Table 5-28 below (Republic of South Africa, 1997), and includes the following:

Table 5-28: Comparison between the Batho Pele White Paper’s Service Delivery Improvement Programme and its implementation strategy

| Strategy | Programme |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Identify the customer | N/A |
| Establish customer needs | Organisational systems providing inputs re the type and frequency of services |
| Establish current service baseline | Existing levels of service the financial management systems which will collect data on the unit costs of key services, |

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Establish improvement gap | N/A |
| Set service standards | proposed service standards Organisational arrangements which will ensure standards are met |
| Gear up for delivery | N/A |
| Announce standards | Communications systems |
| Monitoring and evaluation | Monitoring of service standards Complaints system |

Source: Republic of South Africa (1997)

When examining Table 5-28, the strategy seems to be unaligned to the actual service delivery improvement plan resulting in the programme not effectively making the strategy concrete as well as giving little guidance with regards to implementation. Moreover, the model format for the Service Delivery Improvement Programme does not reflect the requirements for such a programme as prescribed by the Batho Pele White Paper (Republic of South Africa, 1997). The strategy is based on eight steps which include (a) identifying the customer; (b) establishing customer needs and priorities; (c) establishing the current service baseline; (d) identifying the improvement gap; (e) setting up service standards; (f) announcing service standards; and (g) monitoring delivery against standards and publishing the results (Republic of South Africa, 1997).

Some critique against this strategy as stipulated in the Batho Pele White Paper, (Republic of South Africa, 1997) is that it fails to include service quality dimensions which form the basis of service quality (Zeithaml et al., 1990:111). Without knowing what quality standards to strive for, it is impossible to improve existing levels of service quality (Zeithaml et al., 1990:111). The strategy does mention service standards, which form part of the service design or policy gap (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:406) and which should typically reflect customers' perceptions (Zeithaml et al., 2009:36).

The template of the service improvement programme (or the annual report to the citizens as it prescribed by the Batho Pele White Paper), addresses customer segmentation (i.e. customer identification and identification of needs) and then continues to use the individual Batho Pele principles (as quality standards not mentioned in the strategy) to structure feedback (Republic of South Africa, 1997). Feedback is structured according to customer

segmentation and existing and future consultation arrangements regarding results (Republic of South Africa, 1997).

Several points of criticism relate to the above-mentioned service improvement programme. These include unspecified service quality gap(s) to enable decision makers to accurately identify the organisational areas where service quality falls short (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:424). The strategy mentions the identification of the “improvement gap”, but the programme does not continue to develop this (Republic of South Africa, 1997). As mentioned previously, Lovelock and Wirtz (2011:410-411) identified six different service quality gaps which can be used to audit organisational service performance and capabilities in an effort to assess the factors that influence service quality (Zeithaml et al., 2009:44) and in this way, establish the “current service baseline” (Republic of South Africa, 1997).

Although the strategy fails to address quality dimensions for serving as service quality standards, the service improvement programme included the Batho Pele principles, which can serve as quality dimensions against which service delivery can be evaluated (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:53).²¹ The principles (or quality dimensions) were not linked to service quality gaps, which makes it challenging for decision makers to effectively address service shortcomings because no proper diagnosis can be made to ascertain the quality issue(s) (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:410-411). Lastly, no monitoring or oversight component is built into the strategy or the service improvement programme, even though the White Paper explicitly states that the service delivery improvement programme should demonstrate how service standards will be monitored and reported (Republic of South Africa, 1997).

In summary, it is clear from the above critical analysis that the Batho Pele White Paper strategy does not inform the improvement programme that meant to serve as an implementation plan giving effect to the theory encapsulated in the strategy and is not aligned to the programme (Republic of South Africa, 1997). There seems to be some misalignment regarding service standards and quality standards – the strategy prescribes the development of service standards, whilst the template programme focuses on quality standards (Republic of South Africa, 1997). The service quality or “improvement” gap and the monitoring component

²¹ Also see Lovelock and Wirtz (2011:407) for a list of the 10 original quality dimensions. The discussion on service dimensions as previously mentioned in this chapter, contributed to this list by adding dimensions for the public sector.

mentioned in the strategy are not implemented in the programme (Republic of South Africa, 1997).

5.5.2. Strategy 2: The “Four Box” Service Improvement Model

Another example of a service improvement model is the “four box” service improvement model which was developed by the Canadian Centre for Management Development and the Citizen Centred Service Network (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:21, 42). In essence, the model seeks to close the gap which occurs between citizens’ expectations of public services, on the one hand, and their satisfaction with the services they receive, on the other (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:21). This is accomplished by using performance measurement information (e.g., surveys) to identify what citizens regard as the most important areas for improvement and allow the survey information to inform service improvement decisions (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:21). Figure 5-9 below, illustrates the “four box” service improvement model (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:21, 42).

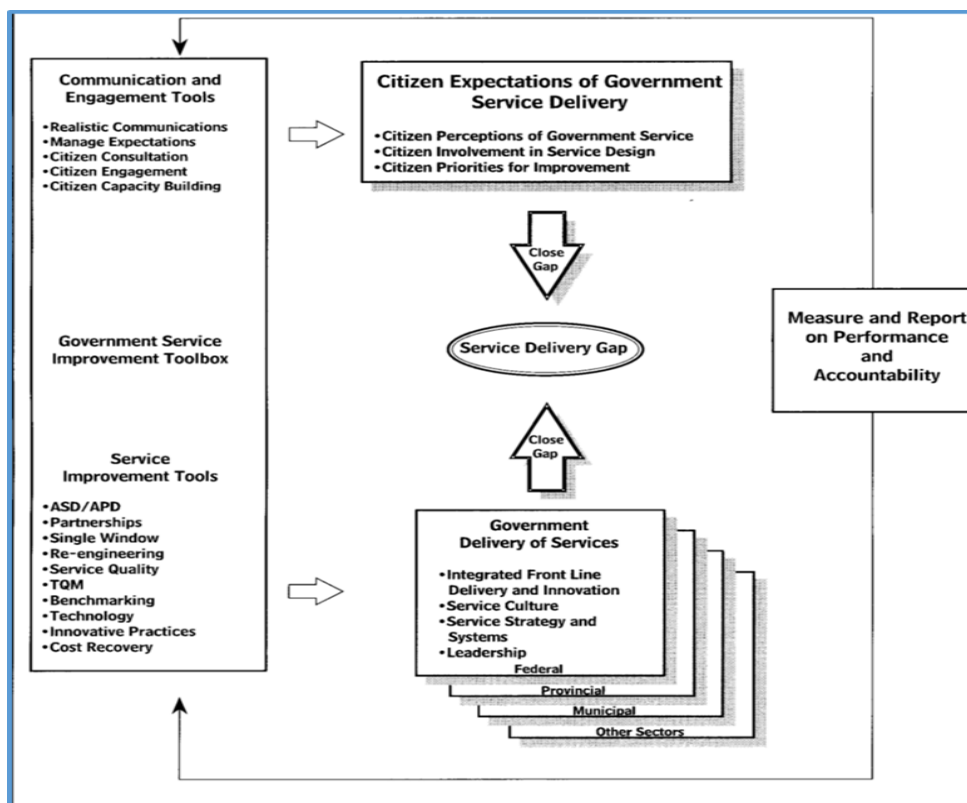


Figure 5-9: The "four box" service improvement model developed by the Canadian Centre for Management Development and the Citizen Centred Service Network as cited in Dinsdale and Marson (1999:21, 42)

A point of criticism against “four box” service improvement model includes that it only addresses one out of six possible service quality gaps, i.e. the service performance or delivery gap which signifies the discrepancy between the development of customer-driven service

standards and actual service performance by employees (Zeithaml et al., 2009:38), as discussed previously in 2.3.1 on page 66 of this research document. The other gaps include the service design gap; the listening gap; the communication gap; the perception gap; and the combined service quality gap (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:410-411), which are not addressed at all by the “four box” model. An effective improvement strategy ought to take all the quality gaps into consideration in order to examine all factors influencing service quality (Zeithaml et al., 2009:44).

Secondly, surveys (as indicated by the “four box” model) are not the only gap-closing strategy – the listening gap uses surveys as a method to listen to their customers through research and to obtain an understanding of their expectations (Zeithaml et al., 2009:140). Other gaps have their own related strategies, such as service innovation for service design-related problems (Zeithaml et al., 2009:253). To remedy the service delivery gap, human resource strategies for delivering service quality through people are employed which include hiring the right people; developing people to deliver service quality; providing needed support systems; and retaining the best people (Zeithaml et al., 2009:361), as discussed.

Thirdly, the “four box” model omits to demonstrate service quality dimensions (as previously discussed in on page 78 of this research) according to which services can be evaluated (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:407). As also discussed before, the service quality dimensions ought to be linked to related gap areas to enable the application of the appropriate gap-closing strategies (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:410-411). The “four box” service improvement model caters for only one out of six possible quality gaps, as mentioned previously (Zeithaml et al., 2009:38).

Fourthly, the improvement box of the model as seen in Figure 5-9 above, is constituted of generic organisational interventions, and can benefit from the inclusion of developmental aspects especially for application in South Africa. The communication and engagement tools could also include development communication media to reach community groups effectively (Barker, 2001:9-12). As mentioned previously, development communication includes community-based printed media such as local newspapers; interactive media like community radio; and community online media such as cellular phones (Barker, 2001:9-12).

The focus on including community perspectives in services is key when dealing with issues relating to consultation with citizens; the SASAS case example found that there was least agreement (19 percent against 44 percent agreement on access) amongst respondents about consultation with Government being sufficient, and the general message from respondents

was that Government was improving services but was not managing to communicate and respond to citizens' priorities, as mentioned before (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54-55). Addressing issues regarding consultation and engaging citizens is a key to strengthening institutional trust and satisfaction with services – the SASAS case example also proved that citizens that have engaged in non-institutionalised political participation tended to rate service delivery performance higher against quality standards, as mentioned before (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:60).

The same can be said for the service improvement tools, as shown in Figure 5-9 above. A customer-oriented focus and customer-defined standards can really make a difference in terms of improving satisfaction with services and service quality (Zeithaml et al., 2009:283, 292). As mentioned previously, customers need to be talked to in order to get to know their opinions, perceptions and views on what will contribute to a satisfying service experience (Zeithaml, 2009:292). The service improvement tools proposed by Dinsdale and Marson (1999:42) should incorporate a customer-oriented focus in their application, e.g. the service quality standards and goals should be explicitly designed to meet customer expectations, and employees must accept these set quality goals and standards, in order to implement them successfully (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:410).

The box relating to measuring and reporting on performance and accountability in the model shown in Figure 5-9 above should include citizen evaluative practices in the form of PME methods (Civicus & PG Exchange, 2012:1-2) to (a) ensure that a customer-oriented focus is maintained throughout the service improvement process (Zeithaml et al., 2009:283; 292) and (b) to guarantee greater buy-in, support and, ultimately, greater satisfaction from citizens as government customers (CPSI, 2004:9). As mentioned previously, these PME methods or tools can be applied to suit a wide variety of oversight and accountability objectives based on an evaluative citizen foundation varying from methods to obtain a better understanding of stakeholder perceptions and needs (i.e. stakeholder surveys) to methods that can be used to apply external pressure on municipalities that under-perform (i.e. the community monitoring and evaluative approach) as well as methods enabling the detection of systemic inefficiencies or corruption in service delivery (i.e. public expenditure tracking) (Civicus & PG Exchange, 2012:2).

5.5.3. Strategy 3: The “Five Box” Service Improvement Strategy

Having the previous overview of various service improvement strategies, the “five box” service improvement strategy is proposed by this research, and is illustrated by Diagram 5-24 below

on page 202 of this research. The “five box” service improvement strategy suggests the inclusion of service quality dimensions or criteria (refer to Box A in Diagram 5-24), which were lacking in the previous two service improvement strategies. The Batho Pele White Paper emphasised the importance of customers’ main requirements, e.g. the accessibility of services and accuracy (Republic of South Africa, 1997). These requirements are captured in the service dimensions and the Batho Pele principles which indicate a sense of customer (or citizen) centricity (Zeithaml et al., 2009:289).

The quality dimensions include some of the dimensions that customers typically apply when evaluating services as well as the Batho Pele principles, which provide for the evaluative requirements of the public sector and collective services (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:407; Republic of South Africa, 1997). The service dimensions for the public sector therefore include courtesy openness and transparency (or credibility), access. consultation (or communication or understanding customers), redress (or responsiveness) and value for money (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:407; Republic of South Africa, 1997). Other dimensions which do not form part of the Batho Pele principles but which are crucial to performance quality assessment include security, reliability and competence as encapsulated by the original ten quality dimensions (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:407).

The “five box” service improvement strategy also features gap-closing strategies and development communication methods. (refer to Box B in Diagram 5-24 below). The gap-closing strategies include the following: service recovery (Zeithaml et al., 2009:212); improvement of market research procedures (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:410); implementation of effective customer feedback systems (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:410) and increased interactions between customers and management (i.e. upward communication) for the listening gap is advised (Zeithaml et al., 2009:165).

The gap-closing strategies for the service design gap of this research entail customer-defined standards (Zeithaml et al., 2009:289; Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:410); innovation (Zeithaml et al., 2009:253); systematic, customer-centric process for designing and re-designing service processes (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:410). The remedying strategies to address the service delivery gap, include attracting and hiring the best employees; developing employees to deliver quality services; providing the required support systems; and retaining the best employees (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:410; Zeithaml et al., 2009:361). Lovelock and Wirtz (2011:410) continued and added the education of customers in terms of service usage.

The communication gap requires remedial strategies to concentrate on (a) the role of internal action in closing the communication gap (i.e. communications managers being informed about the operational capabilities of services); and (b) customers' understanding of communication (i.e. service organisations should be specific with promises to customers) (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:411). Zeithaml (2009:479) added that the coordination of marketing service communication is key to closing this gap.

In terms of the perception gap, the general approach would be to make service results concrete and clear in order to effectively communicate the nature of the service to the customer (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:411). The sixth gap relating to service quality can be addressed by consistently managing the listening, service design, service performance, communication and perception gaps (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:408).

The development communication media (see Box B in Diagram 5-24) enable public sector service providers to apply context-specific communication media to effectively reach target community groups (Barker, 2001:9-12), in that way improving access to services as stated in the Batho Pele White Paper (Republic of South Africa, 1997). The development communication media also play a significant role in dealing with barriers involving access to basic services in South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 1997).

Improvement frameworks also define the various gap areas and indicate the nature of such gaps (see Box C and Box D). Diagram 5-24 also indicates the influencing factors that have an effect on expectations and perceptions, which is indicative of an open systems model.

The monitoring and evaluation aspect is addressed in Box E (Diagram 5-24) and includes participative monitoring and evaluation methods.

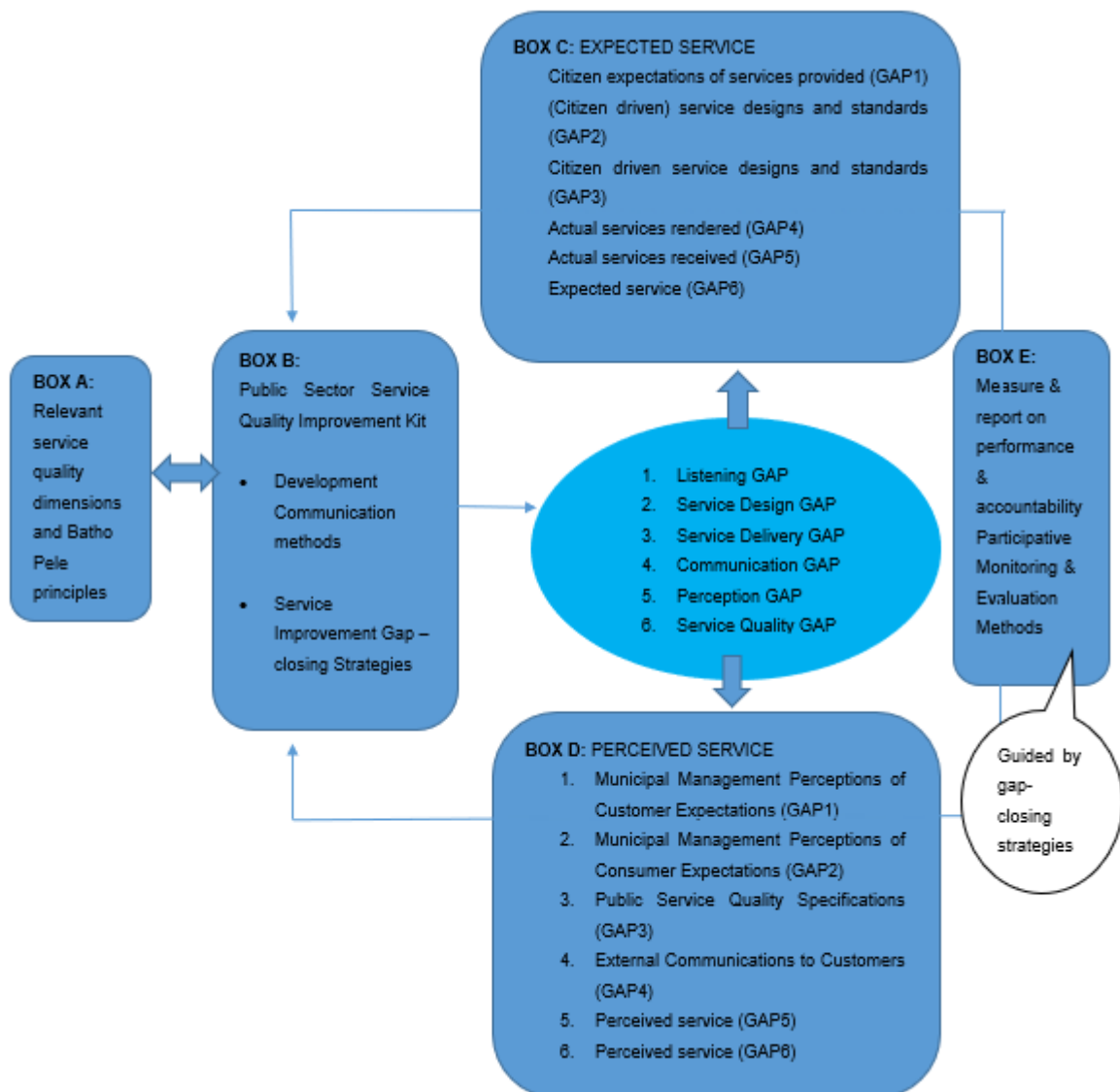


Diagram 5-24: The “Five Box” service improvement strategy for the public sector

Source(s): Adapted and extended from Dinsdale and Marson (1999: 21, 42)

The above-mentioned “Five Box” service improvement strategy advises the improvement plan or framework and addresses the service improvement framework in the next part of the discussion.

5.6. SERVICE IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK

The Batho Pele White Paper clearly states what a service improvement initiative for the public sector should address in terms of values, and what it should aim to achieve in society (Republic of South Africa, 1997). The White Paper mentions the creation of a framework for service delivery which treats citizens more like customers and enables the citizens to hold public servants accountable (Republic of South Africa, 1997). It stipulated that improving the delivery of public services should aim to redress the imbalances of the past, whilst simultaneously maintaining the continuity of service to all levels of society (Republic of South Africa, 1997).

Emphasis should be placed on meeting the needs of the particularly vulnerable societal groups who have previously been disadvantaged in terms of service delivery (Republic of South Africa, 1997). These requirements pose a service challenge to decision makers: not only should the best possible quality service be delivered to all citizens, but it should be done equitably, restoring socio-political balance to society (Republic of South Africa, 1997). As mentioned before, institutional trust influences public service satisfaction and political behaviour is directly linked to public service satisfaction and the extent to which citizens are able to influence political decisions and bring about improvement in public service delivery (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:61).

With the above-mentioned requirements in mind, a service improvement framework is suggested below. It is divided into four phases, with the first phase constituting the diagnostic phase which introduces the quality gaps to enable detailed analysis of the problem situation. As discussed previously, detailed knowledge of what the problem entails enables decision makers to choose a remedial strategy accordingly. In this research, the quality dimension which can be used to evaluate the service (and indicate the expectations of the customer to the service provider) is linked to the gap-closing solution.

The second phase, or the remedial phase, consists of appropriate gap-closing strategies to address service shortcomings. The strategies are linked to the (adapted) service dimensions which include the Batho Pele principles (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54) and some of the 10 original dimensions (Zeithaml et al., 1990:25) that were not addressed by the Batho Pele principles. The gap-closing strategies correspond to the quality dimension(s) related to the gap area – this is a logical progression because after remedying a service shortcoming there needs to be a quality measure in place whereby to evaluate the service in question to assist

in preventing the problem from recurring and to drive service quality (Zeithaml et al., 2009:111).

In relation to the listening gap, service recovery is linked to redress, courtesy and consultation, because the aim of service recovery is to respond to the complaint in a manner which (a) leaves the customer feeling satisfied about the outcome; and (b) promotes goodwill between the customer and the service rendering organisation (Hoffman & Bateson, 2006:572). All the previously mentioned relate to being treated with respect and consideration (i.e. courtesy); being listened to and taken seriously (i.e. consultation); and being assisted promptly (i.e. redress) (Lovelock & Wirtz 2007:407; Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54).

The strategies for addressing the performance gap all relate to the human resources function of an organisation (including (a) employing the most suitable employees; (b) developing employees to deliver service quality; (c) providing needed support systems; and (d) retaining the best employees (Zeithaml et al. 2009:361). The chosen employees in whom the organisation will invest through training and retention strategies must therefore can perform the promised service (i.e. reliability) and be in possession of the required skills and knowledge (i.e. competence), in order to effectively close the performance gap that results from a discrepancy between quality standards and the actual service performance of employees (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:407, 406). The presence of service standards that stipulate the level and quality of services, is of key importance when employees are expected to perform at a satisfactory level and deliver quality services (Republic of South Africa, 1997). In this way the performance gap should be remedied, and repetition of the problem should be minimised by maintaining the quality dimensions of reliability, competence and service standards.

The service design gap requires that customer-defined service standards be crafted and implemented in order to address this quality shortfall (Zeithaml, 2009:289). Consultation and all the other communication-related dimensions (i.e. proving information, openness and transparency) should be in place to ensure that service standards are citizen-driven and truly reflect the perceptions of the citizen (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54-55; Zeithaml et al., 2009:36; Republic of South Africa, 1997). Another gap-closing strategy is innovation and the creation of new service solutions (Zeithaml et al., 2009:253-255) which is closely linked to value for money, which prescribes the economic and efficient use of state resources and which may be achieved at a low cost (Republic of South Africa, 1997).

The communication gap can be addressed through the application of strategies which include the coordination of marketing service communication (Zeithaml et al., 2009: 479), as well as

improving internal communication and the customer's understanding of communication content (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:411). The principles relating to communication will govern service quality in this gap area, i.e. the principles of consultation providing information and (Republic of South Africa, 1997). This includes conferring with citizens and providing them with accurate, suitable information regarding the content of services (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54).

With regard to the perception gap, where the quality issue relates to the way in which the customer perceives the service that was experienced, the gap-closing strategies require the ability to clarify the service and to be able to communicate that to the customer (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:411). The quality dimension for this gap is in providing complete and accurate information to citizens using a variety of media to suit citizens' requirements (Republic of South Africa, 1997).

The oversight phase of the framework includes participatory monitoring and evaluation methods for overseeing public service improvement and service implementation efforts for achieving a range of objectives such as the prudent application of allocated public resources; facilitating citizen feedback regarding service quality performance and assessment thereof; systemic evaluation of services; and holding (local) government accountable in terms of their service promises (Malena, 2012:14; McDonald, 2012:1; Pekkonen & Sadashiva, 2012:1-5; Pekkonen, 2012a:1-5; Sadashiva, 2012:2-5; Post & Agarwal, 2011:3,12). This approach is particularly suitable in the public service context as it creates opportunities for citizens to provide feedback and participate in service assessment, as well as quality improvement, as mentioned previously (Civicus & PG Exchange, 2012:1).

The service quality or customer gap is, as discussed, the accumulation of all the other gaps and will be addressed when the other gaps have been closed (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:411). The previously discussed quality dimensions will therefore have to be upheld when evaluating quality where this gap is concerned.

Table 5-29 provides a template for a suggested service improvement framework based on the preceding discussions.

Table 5-29: Service Improvement Plan for public sector service delivery

| DIAGNOSTIC PHASE | | REMEDYING PHASE | | OVERSIGHT PHASE | | |
|------------------------|---|--|--|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|---|
| Problem Identification | Problem Description | Strategies for closing gap | Quality Dimensions | Suggested oversight (PME) method(s) | Qualitative/ Quantitative | Application |
| Listening Gap | Discrepancy between the expected service and what the provider perceives to be the expectation(s) | Service Recovery | Courtesy Redress Consultation | Stakeholder Surveys | Quantitative | Applied <u>to obtain a better understanding of the perceptions; attitudes; experiences; knowledge and interests of their internal and external stakeholders, in order to make improvements to the service delivery process.</u> |
| | | | | Citizen Report Cards | Quantitative/ Qualitative | Applied as a <u>tool to engage citizens and solicit user feedback</u> regarding the service quality and performance i to raise citizen awareness. |
| | | | | FSDM operational programme | Quantitative | Applied to enable visible monitoring and evaluation of service delivery at operational level to authenticate service delivery outputs and outcomes as stated in the delivery agreements. |
| Service Design Gap | Discrepancy between citizen expectations and the provider's quality standards and service design. | Customer defined service standards; service tangibles; innovation. | Service Standards; value for money; consultation; openness & transparency; | Citizen Charter | N/A | <u>Refines service delivery processes</u> by clarifying the standards, which could assist in the design of such services and monitors effectiveness. |

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|--|--|---|--|-------------|--|
| | | | providing information | | | |
| Service Performance Gap | Discrepancy between quality standards and the service performance by employees. | (a) to hire the most suitable employees; (b) to develop employees to deliver service quality; (c) to provide needed support systems; and (d) to retain the best employees. | Service Standards Competence Reliability Providing information | Community Scorecards or voice cards | N/A | CS processes provide mechanisms for direct feedback between citizens and the public sector service providers. Generates performance criteria. Can be applied to repeatedly to form part of continuous service monitoring and evaluation) |
| | | | | Social Audits | Qualitative | Supplements traditional financial audits <u>to assist government to evaluate overall performance and</u> compare public perceptions and stated core values. |
| Communication Gap | Disjunction between citizen expectations and external communication to citizens through promises that were made. | Coordinating marketing service communication Two-pronged approach including focusing on internal communication and customer understanding of communication content. | Providing Information/ Consultation/ | Community Monitoring & Evaluative Approach | N/A | Can be applied to put external pressure on government when it is not performing as promised. Also, to improve the relationship between citizens and the state or government. . |

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|--|---|---|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| | | | | Community Scorecards/ Voice Cards | N/A | Provides mechanisms for direct feedback between citizens and the public sector service providers and can be applied to continuously provide service feedback to citizens to ensure that service promises have been kept. |
| Perception Gap | Discrepancy between the quality service delivered and that which was experienced. | Tangibilise and communicate service | Providing information/ | Stakeholder Surveys | Quantitative | Applied <u>to obtain a better understanding of the perceptions; attitudes; experiences; knowledge and interests of their internal and external stakeholders, in order to make improvements to the service delivery process.</u> |
| | | | | Social Audits | Qualitative | Supplements traditional financial audits to assist government to evaluate overall performance and <u>compare public perceptions and stated core values.</u> |
| Service Quality Gap | Consistently addressing all the formerly mentioned gaps to overcome this particular gap. | All the above-mentioned gap-closing strategies. | All the above-mentioned dimensions and principles | All the above-mentioned PME methods | Qualitative/ Quantitative | N/A |

Sources: PME methods (Malena, 2012:14; McDonald, 2012:1; Pekkonen & Sadashiva, 2012:1-5; Pekkonen, 2012:1-4; Pekkonen, 2012b:1-5; Sadashiva, 2012:2-5; Post & Agarwal, 2011:3,12) Service Quality Gaps (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:406-408) Quality Dimensions (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:407; Republic of South Africa, 1997) Gap-closing strategies (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:410-411)

As seen in Table 5-29 above, this improvement strategy responds to the most basic requirements for an improvement and responds to the shortcomings of the first two strategies.

5.7. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the key constituents of a service improvement strategy were explored in order to effectively devise one. Firstly, the dimensions of service quality were explored with specific focus on the requirements of the public sector, to establish customer-focused assessment measures for service quality. Secondly, the gap analysis was revisited to serve as a diagnostic tool to ascertain quality shortcomings, and to investigate options for gap-closing strategies. In the process, oversight methods for each gap area were also established. Thirdly, the development communication methods were considered to establish suitable media to facilitate communication with citizens. Fourthly, an analysis of various service improvement strategies was performed to establish the key requirements for such an endeavour. Lastly, a citizen-centred service improvement framework which incorporated citizen evaluations and inputs (i.e. citizen perception) was developed.

The framework is supported and informed by an implementation strategy (Republic of South Africa, 1997) aimed at addressing the service quality gaps or shortcomings (Zeithaml et al., 2009:31-42); creating quality dimensions suitable for the public sector (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:420); and establishing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to oversee the implementation of the improvement strategy (Civicus & PG Exchange, 2012:2).

Chapter 5 also analysed the role of communication (with specific reference to development communication) in citizen evaluation and service quality improvement.

6. CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. INTRODUCTION

Citizens' perspectives of Government and public services were included in this study in a service improvement framework. To strengthen the emphasis on focusing on citizens' needs as opposed to what Government management thinks those needs should be (Zeithaml et al., 2009:34), PME techniques for overseeing service improvement efforts have been included (Civicus & PG Exchange, 2012:2). Public sector service performance evaluations tend focus on predominantly "hard" quality measures (operational outcomes such as how many water connections were installed) while often neglecting the "soft" issues (such as citizen perspectives, expectations and needs) which can (a) provide a more balanced view of the real quality levels of services and (b) better inform policy and decision makers by uncovering what internal clients perceive to be barriers to improvement, or help guide the development of service standards (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:18).

The study facilitated the development of a service improvement strategy which includes an assessment component. The assessment component consists of a diagnostic instrument, based on the Gaps model of service quality assessment (Zeithaml et al., 2009:43-44). The assessment model can be used to identify those organisational areas where service quality problems are most likely to occur. Each organisational area is linked to an appropriate gap-closing strategy aimed at remedying that specific gap area (Zeithaml et al., 2009:43-44). The gap areas are also linked to citizen-oriented service quality dimensions (measures) (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:407).

The improvement strategy (referred to as the "five box" strategy) was modelled after the "four box" model for modernising public service delivery. The strategy supports and informs the improvement plan (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:42). The "five box" strategy consists of five key elements of the strategy, and includes (a) service quality measures, (b) quality improvement techniques for public service improvement consisting of (i) development communication techniques, and (ii) gap-closing strategies, (c) six organisational gap areas where service quality shortcomings are most likely to occur, (d) the six types of service-related expectations of citizens, (e) the six types of citizen service-related perceptions, and (f) the oversight techniques which are crucial to the implementation of improvement endeavours.

The importance of “soft” and “hard” service quality performance measures (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:416, 418) were emphasised in the comparative analysis of selected South African case examples. The case examples represented both performance measures to ascertain the impact of perceptions in relation to service quality assessment. It was found that “soft” in combination with “hard” measures presented a more comprehensive view of service quality (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:416, 418). The survey based on “hard” measures provided factual data whereas those surveys containing “soft” measures were able to elaborate on the factual information and to explain service phenomena. Both measures are important and serve a purpose in the public sector industry.

In the next part of the discussion, the key findings and implications applying to public services and service assessment practices, which occurred in the analysis are highlighted.

6.2. KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

A number of key findings were made during the course of this research study. This section summarises the main implications and conclusions that could be drawn from these findings.

6.2.1. Effects of the different natures of public- and private sector services

It was found that the application of service related concepts to the public sector results in distinct outcomes and, although required for both public and private sector industries, once applied to these sector industries, the outcomes are very dissimilar due on the distinct natures of the two sectors and their associated services (Gildenhuis & Knipe, 2000: 57-59). This means that the nature of a service determines the definition of service quality, evaluation, satisfaction and loyalty. This has various implications, e.g. with the concept of loyalty as it applies to the public sector. The outcomes of this application currently are unclear (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:19). The monopolistic nature of public or collective services (Gildenhuis & Knipe, 2000:57-59) determines that public service offerings cannot demand loyalty to the same extent as private or specific services do, because the service cannot be obtained somewhere else. In the case of collective services loyalty will instead mean voter confidence – trust and support due to the direct relationship between satisfaction and institutional trust (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:62), as opposed to loyalty to particular services that amounts to customers buying more of a service and being rewarded for their patronage (Arnould et al., 2004:783).

In terms of service quality, it was found that the quality dimensions/ measures (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:416, 418) had to be adapted to suit the specific demands of the public sector and therefore of collective services (Gildenhuis & Knipe, 2000:57). For example, collective services due to their nature require consultation as opposed to communication as a service quality dimension, the latter being more suitable for particular services. This is due to the fact that the public sector definition of communication requires citizen involvement (Republic of South Africa, 2000) in addition to communication, i.e. listening to customers and keeping them informed in a language they can understand, which defines communication (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:420).

Satisfaction in the public sector will therefore be different, because the quality dimensions that are used for evaluating performance of the service varies from that of the private sector and specific services. This, with regard to government services, requires an adjustment of the customer's mind-set, e.g. tangibles or physical evidence of services will not necessarily manifest to the benefit of the service provider (e.g. over investment in physical facilities), but will have to benefit the citizen (e.g. investment in translation services and ensuring that a municipal bill is easy to understand) (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:420-421), in order to be true to the principle and quality dimension of value for money which promotes the highest quality service for citizens in the most economic and efficient way to benefit the citizen as customer (Republic of South Africa, 1997). Tangibles in the private sector often manifest through equipment, buildings, etc. to promote a feeling of competence in the customer who often uses it as a way to judge quality and benefits the customer indirectly (Zeithaml et al., 2009: 313). However, this does not mean that public facilities should not be adequately equipped to fulfil service objectives. The emphasis would, however, be on functionality, efficiency and economy (Republic of South Africa, 1997).

6.2.2. Modernising quality and quality assessment to accommodate the public services

The reconstructing of the concept of service quality assessment to accommodate the public domain constitutes a key observation in this research study. Due to the distinct difference in the natures of public and private services (Gildenhuis & Knipe, 2000:56-59), it is unrealistic (if not inaccurate) to measure the two types of service according to the same quality measures (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:v). The concept of quality and its assessment need to consider the specific traits and values that differentiate public services. The following statement by authors Dinsdale and Marson (1999:v) explains this research conundrum:

Public services seek different ends (protecting the public interest) through different means (equity and due process) than profit-seeking private sector services, with the result that public services (like private sector services) seek to maximize client satisfaction but unlike the private sector this satisfaction must be balanced with protecting the public interest.

This research therefore strived to adapt service quality measures or dimensions to suit the public sector domain (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:407) based on the unique qualities of public services (Gildenhuys & Knipe, 2000:56-59).

The absence of competence and reliability as quality dimensions (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011: 407) in the Batho Pele principles is a point of concern (Republic of South Africa, 1997). Without ensuring the competence and service reliability of frontline or servicing staff it would be impossible to deliver quality services and improve service delivery. The Batho Pele White Paper mentions “ensuring that the service quality is up to standard” but provides no quality dimensions to guide Government employees in this matter (Republic of South Africa, 1997). The FSDM Operational Framework which is aimed at the specific oversight of frontline employees also does not include competence or reliability as part of the FSDM monitored key performance areas (Department of Planning Monitoring & Evaluation, 2015:7-8).

6.2.3. Political behaviour; institutional trust and public services satisfaction

The more politically empowered citizens feel, the more satisfied they are with services because of knowing that their participation was meaningful and brought about the necessary changes. This will also decrease the need for people to turn to unconventional political behaviour to get Government’s attention. The SASAS case example proved a positive relationship between participation in unconventional forms of political activity and service satisfaction (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:59). The study ascribed this to a belief amongst protesting participants that their actions bring about change (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:59). Government has to facilitate ways to empower citizens and prevent them from feeling that they need to express their views through extreme political actions and protest, to be able to meaningfully contribute to service delivery. Under the former regime protest was the only alternative available to citizens to communicate their views to Government. Today, legislation supports the involvement of citizens in policy matters, and is able to facilitate this dialogue by means of citizen evaluation; PME; and development communication methods.

6.2.4. The diagnostic instrument

Another key finding includes the inherent importance of a diagnostic instrument (Zeithaml et al., 2009: 44-45) to structure and coordinate service improvement efforts (see section 5.3 of this research). The Gap analysis model facilitates the auditing of the quality of service performance efforts but, more importantly, provides a way to diagnose quality-related problems according to specific “symptoms” or quality shortcomings displayed within the organisation (Zeithaml et al., 2009: 44-45) and provides direction in terms of (i) the relevant remedial strategy to apply in order to address the shortcomings; and (ii) the quality dimensions and principles applicable to prevent this gap and ensure that the success of remedial strategies do not deteriorate.

In addition to the above, specific oversight techniques can be applied to the gap area concerned. The reason for this is to monitor the implementation of remedial strategies. The oversight methods mainly include PME methods (Civicus & PG Exchange, 2012:2). The disadvantage of PME is the absence of frontline employee monitoring assessment (Civicus & PG Exchange, 2012:2). PME methods are, however, sensitive to organisational aspects, as illustrated by PET, which tracks organisational allocation and spending of resources from their origin to the end (Civicus & PG Exchange, 2012:2). This deficiency can be addressed by introducing initiatives such as the FSDM operational framework. The FSDM provides an example of frontline oversight and monitoring of the quality of frontline service delivery (Department of Planning Monitoring & Evaluation, 2015:7).

6.2.5. Citizen evaluation and customer feedback

Another key observation includes that citizen evaluation constitutes the “customer feedback” of the public sector. Legislation provides citizens with a “voice” in terms of public service delivery. The Batho Pele principles confirm this notion and include consultation as a quality dimension (Republic of South Africa, 1997). The PME techniques (Civicus & PG Exchange, 2012:2) and development (or participatory) communication methods (Barker, 2001:9-12) that need to be used in conjunction with PME, are all effective ways of facilitating citizen evaluation. PME also enables citizens to engage with Government and not only provide feedback but (i) to be part of quality performance evaluation; (ii) to facilitate the dialogue between citizens and Government and ultimately strengthen the relationship with Government; and (iii) to hold Government accountable in terms of its spending of public resources (Civicus & PG Exchange, 2012:1-2).

6.2.6. Role of indexes in the public sector

The authors Dinsdale and Marson pointed out some of the dangers of applying indexes (using the example of a satisfaction index) to the public sector and collective services (1999:19). Indexes are useful for comparing performance (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:19), but their application with regards to public service assessment remains problematical. The main benefit of the indexing approach to quality assessment involves determining whether quality is improving or deteriorating nationally, by sector and by industry. However, when the goal is improving service to citizens, the application of indexes is questionable. As demonstrated by the analysis of the Munidex case example, indexes tend to be rather restricted in their ability to guide and truly inform service improvement endeavours and are unable to provide the type of in-depth information that is critical if resources are to be allocated efficiently and effectively (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:19).

All three case examples (i.e. the SASAS survey, the Tshwane survey and the Munidex survey) measured service quality within the national and provincial governing spheres at a particular point in time (i.e. 2008/2009). The results produced by the Munidex survey, presented evidence of public service quality; benchmarked the results against similar organisations (i.e. comparing the results of various provinces; cities; district and local municipalities); and measured whether there had been improvement in performance or not through the use of total improvement indexes which were based on the percent change of households with access to particular services (Hawes & Mahomed, 2009:16; 23).

The results produced by both the SASAS- and the Tshwane survey, on the other hand, not only revealed how the adult population perceived public services, but also specific dimensions or standards of service quality in the form of the Batho Pele statements (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:55). The survey results indicated the areas of service quality that should be prioritised and given immediate attention, e.g. consultation where the agreement with the Batho Pele statement was very low (i.e. 19 percent) (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:55). The two surveys produced divergent outcomes and perspectives on the same matters.

The applicability of the index model to the public sector operates on the premise that the consequences of increased satisfaction are decreased complaints as well as increased loyalty and its intrinsic benefit of profitability (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:19). Citizens as public sector clients have very few (if any) services alternatives to Government services and loyalty in the public sector is not linked to profitability (for the service provider) or quality relative to price (for

the receiver of services). Most Government (or public) services are funded by taxation and pricing information is not always known by the public (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:19). Public sector values (e.g. equity) determine that all citizens must have access to basic (or public) services and goals like profitability do not apply. Loyalty is linked to voter confidence and - support, meaning that public sector loyalty is influenced by voters (i.e. citizens) following and supporting a political party.

6.2.7. Case example analysis

The analyses based on the research theme of the relationship between perceived service levels and satisfaction, proved that the perception-based survey (i.e. the SASAS survey) rated citizen satisfaction with public services and Government performance significantly lower than the institutional feedback survey (i.e. the Munidex survey). This can be interpreted as either Government performance is not actually that good; or that citizens perceive public services in a different light. The answer to this lies in a finding from the SASAS survey which suggested that the overarching message from respondents was that Government is improving delivery but not managing to communicate and respond to people's priorities (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:54). This implies that good efforts to improve services are made by Government, but those efforts lack customer orientation and citizen involvement. The service quality dimension of consultation has not been satisfied, affecting citizen perception negatively. This was demonstrated by the fact that survey participants rated Government consultation at 19 percent (the lowest score) in terms of agreement with the Batho Pele statements (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:55).

The case example analysis addressed the marginalisation of communities in rural areas in terms of public service provision, as a research theme. Service delivery in rural areas seems to be lacking based on the low satisfaction ratings which were particularly prevalent in the formal rural areas of Tshwane; the rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal; the former homelands of the Eastern Cape; and the North West and Limpopo provinces (Hawes & Mahomed, 2009:2, 4; Roefs et al., 2006:21). The general low scoring in terms of agreement with the Batho Pele indicators (especially in the rural areas near commercial farms) reinforced this finding (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:55-56).

In the above scenario concerning citizens in rural areas, low levels of satisfaction proved to correspond with low levels of perceived service performance which could be ascribed to the geographic location of these communities. These findings were corroborated by observations that low LSM (Living Standards Measures) households are more likely to receive lower levels

of basic services (Roefs et al., 2006:22). Also, citizens living under poorer conditions were more likely to rate their servicing municipality much lower than those people with medium and high living standards (2008:57). This implies that citizens in low income households living in remote areas are in a dire situation in terms of benefiting from public service delivery, (a) being un-serviced due to their location; (b) being poor, which is exacerbated by the lack of infrastructure and support normally gained from public service delivery; and (c) being dissatisfied and disillusioned with Government, which engenders a desperate mind-set fuelling unconventional political behaviour. Communities as described above, should also be a priority for Government with regard to service improvement.

In terms of access to household services and consulting citizens, a number of findings were made. One of these findings relate to the issue of presenting service options to citizens. The SASAS survey found that the difference in ratings sometimes are marginal in spite of the service options being quite different – citizens would sometimes prefer the least expected option yet it satisfies their most basic service need. An example of this was the ratings from citizens with piped water in their dwelling and those with tap water on site or in their yard that were essentially the same (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:56). One would think that people would prefer having access to water at their own dwelling to sharing it with a few others, but for this group of citizens the main objective was that they did not have to go far to get water and that what they had was sufficient for them.

It is at this point where service consultation becomes important to close this service design gap and for citizens to inform and advise Government about their service requirements. The same applied to refuse removal ratings for the City of Tshwane, where residents preferred the alternative method of “own refuse dump or burn” to the municipality removing their refuse (Roefs, et al., 2006:31). Had the City consulted these communities, it could have saved them money and possibly improve their service satisfaction ratings.

The opposite was also found to be true - residents tend to be dissatisfied even when they have access to a service. The dissatisfaction with access to water was highest among tribal area residents (Roefs et al., 2006:29), who happened to have the highest level of access to water (Roefs et al., 2006:21). In this instance, there was clearly a listening gap between citizens' expectations of the service and what Government thought their expectations and service needs should be.

Another finding regarding the matter of access to household services and consulting citizens concluded that sometimes the service alternatives Government created did not matter, for it

was not feasible or acceptable for citizens. This implies that there are often no viable alternatives at the time. The findings on sanitation of the study conducted by Roberts and Hemson (2008:56) proved this. During this finding, citizens indirectly indicated that there is no real second-best option for sanitation but improved toilets, and that Government ought to make sanitation a priority in that particular area and avail more funding to be spent citizens' preferred option.

The findings regarding electricity also proved to be insightful. Statistics showed that the need for access to electricity tends to be greater than Government anticipated due to the use of the service and its impact. Statistics proved that citizens predominantly use electricity for lighting purposes (i.e. 80,1 percent of the time) (Hawes & Mahomed, 2009:2). The fact that electricity is used for heating purposes only 58.7 percent of the time, indicates that there are other sources of energy which people can rely on for heating and the same applies to cooking (Hawes & Mahomed, 2009:2). Citizens are dependent on electricity as the main energy source for lighting, yet the satisfaction levels with electricity turned out to be relatively low (i.e. just over half, with citizens indicating a score of 51.5 satisfaction with electricity services) (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:56). Those citizens who had received the highest quality of electricity services indicated scores of 55.8 for in-house meters and 52.4 for in-house pre-paid meters (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:56). Scoring by those who do not have access to the service was even lower (Roberts & Hemson, 2008:56). This demonstrates a service performance gap between citizens' expectations based on their need for the service and Government's response to these expectations through service delivery.

Regarding access to household services and consultation, it appeared that improving access to a service does not necessarily guarantee citizen satisfaction. Factors such as listening to citizens to ascertain their expectations before service implementation; the design of the service; and the actual performance of the service itself play a significant role in reaching a level where citizens are satisfied (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:406-408).

6.3. KEY CONTRIBUTIONS

The key contributions that this research made include contributions in the following areas: (a) service improvement strategy and framework, as well as (b) quality dimensions in the public sector.

6.3.1. Service improvement strategy and framework

This research refined and operationalised the implementation strategy set out in the Batho Pele White Paper (Republic of South Africa, 1997). It addressed the shortcomings of the “four box” model for service improvement and adjusted it to be suitable for application in the SA public services context (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999: 21, 42).

The “five box” strategy suggests the inclusion of public services oriented quality dimensions which were lacking in the “four box” strategy and the service improvement strategy suggested by the Batho Pele White Paper. The Batho Pele White Paper emphasised the inclusion of customers’ main requirements, e.g. accessibility of services and accuracy (Republic of South Africa, 1997). This requirement was addressed in the service dimensions, which were specifically adapted to the requirements and specific nature of the public sector and therefore of a sense of customer (or rather citizen) centricity (Zeithaml et al., 2009:289).

Service measures (or dimensions) according to which services can be evaluated (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:407), was omitted in the “four box” model (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:42). The “five box” strategy addressed this shortcoming by adapting service dimensions to specifically suit the assessment requirements of the public sector.

Additionally, the “five box” strategy features a diagnostic tool which includes six service quality gaps and their associated gap-closing strategies (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007:407; Zeithaml et al., 2009:34). The Batho Pele White Paper refer to the “improvement gaps” (Republic of South Africa, 1997), but did not develop the concept. The “four box” model correctly identified the service delivery gap but did not expand on and develop the concept (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:42).

The development communication media form part of the “five box” strategy and enables public sector service providers to apply context-specific communication media to effectively reach target community groups (Barker, 2001:9-12). The development communication media supports the implementation of PME techniques (Civicus & PG Exchange, 2012:1-2).

The communication aspect was omitted by the Batho Pele strategy, whilst the communication and engagement tools of the “four box” model did not take into account the possible application of the model to developmental contexts. The monitoring and evaluation aspect is addressed by the research study’s “five box” strategy and includes the PME methods which are focused on citizens’ inputs. This oversight aspect was addressed in the “four box” model (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:42), but did not elaborate on the available techniques that would suit the application’s purpose and context. The same applies to the Batho Pele strategy (Republic of South Africa, 1997). The Service Delivery Improvement Programme contained in the Batho Pele White Paper neglected responding to its strategy (Republic of South Africa, 1997).

6.3.2. Quality dimensions for the public sector

This research responded to the need for the public sector to develop its own service quality measures according to the nature of the type of services involved. Dinsdale and Marson (1999:29) highlighted this need as an area requiring further research, and called upon researchers to identify service-specific elements that influence ratings of service quality. The authors continued by stating that client surveys measure generic service elements such as courtesy and responsiveness, yet the public service adheres to unique values such as due process and equity integral to the public service and which research proved may be more important to citizens (Dinsdale & Marson, 1999:29).

This research study took the Batho Pele principles (Republic of South Africa, 1997) and used the ten original service dimensions to evaluate service quality as identified by Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry (1990:25) to improve and modernise the Batho Pele principles. The original ten service quality dimensions are customer-focused as they represent elements used by consumers in evaluating service quality (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:406). This fits in with the focus on citizen perceptions, which is central to this research. The Batho Pele principles form part of a policy framework aimed at transforming public sector and already captures the values that are key to such services. What was missing included aspects relating to the knowledge and competence of service employees.

6.4. FUTURE APPLICATIONS

Although this research study has provided a foundation for the role of the services economy in the public sector, it is by no means all-inclusive and would require further research. Possible future research topics based on the results of this study are set out below.

- a) The mind-set of the post-apartheid SA public sector consumer and how the former regime has influenced the citizen's ability to receive services could be investigated. This type of research will look into the sociological profiling of the South African citizen as consumer of public services (particularly in those political problem areas identified by this study) and investigate factors that influence it. The main research question would be whether or not it would be possible for a specific group of consumers to be satisfied if their perceptions of public services were affected in that way? During the 1970s, anthropologist Mary Douglas developed a two-dimensional framework for cultural comparisons: (a) grid or constraint by rules, and (b) group or incorporation into a bounded social unit (Caulkins, 1999:108-128). According to Douglas and her colleagues, the four grid/ group types constitute stable social configurations that are associated with distinctive values or ideologies: individualism, fatalism, hierarchy, and egalitarianism (Caulkins, 1999:108-128). This framework and its supportive theory has inspired numerous studies, and could be extended to include the context of socio-political attitudes, public services and networked community governance. A similar study has been conducted by the authors Almond and Verba (2015:3-40), who interviewed citizens in Germany, Italy, Mexico, Great Britain, and the US to learn about learn political attitudes in modern democratic states.
- b) Benchmarking and assessing public services in other developing countries according to the service dimensions developed in this research. The service dimensions could be applied as normative benchmarks to guide the analysis of survey results. This study could also be expanded to include other developing countries and the dimensions could be adapted to reflect the developmental goals of the various governments.

6.5. RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

This research was mainly focused on the South African context and the selected case examples were limited to SA. The perceptions and quality dimensions also reflected the SA

public sector. Secondly, the application of service economy concepts and perspectives were performed only as far as it related to the research objectives of this particular study. Initially, the quantitative data (of the institutional feedback surveys) did not prove sufficient to answer the research questions. The institutional feedback surveys provided information about the levels of service quality, but could not provide information reflecting citizens' views, experiences and perceptions regarding service quality matters. Qualitative data from perception-based surveys provided the required information and was therefore included in the research.

6.6.CONCLUSION

The original driver for this study was political behaviour regarding the services dilemma in South Africa. The motif was to investigate the drivers of that behaviour and what it means to the public sector manager. The solution appears to be locked up in the concept of perceptions and the empowerment of citizens whilst simultaneously improving public service quality through the incorporation of citizen evaluation and participatory monitoring and evaluation.

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8. APPENDIXES

Annexure A: Model format - Service Improvement Programme Plan

Table Appendix-30: Proposed model for a service improvement initiative (or annual citizen report)

ANNEXURE B: MODEL FORMAT FOR SERVICE DELIVERY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME PLAN

NB Shaded area will form part of the Statement of Public Service Commitment

1. CUSTOMERS

1a. Primary customers
(Direct recipients of services)

1b. Secondary customers
(Indirect recipients of services)

2. SERVICES

2a. Main services

2b. Main services provided

3. CONSULTATION

Customers
(List each main group)

Existing consultation arrangements
(Method, frequency, how results are used and publicised)

New consultation arrangements from 1st July 2012
(Method, frequency, how results will be used and publicised)

STAATSKOERANT, 1 OKTOBER 1997

No. 18340 33

STAATSKOERANT, 1 OKTOBER 1997

No. 18340 33

Source: White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (Republic of South Africa, 1997)

Annexure B: Consultative Citizens' Report Card Survey: City of Tshwane (Roefs et al. 2006:2-3,5, 17-18). Extracts of the research demographics.

Research demographics

The City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality (CTMM) is classified as a Category A urban municipality and was established on 5 December 2000. As part of its establishment, 14 municipalities and councils that had previously served the greater Pretoria and surrounding areas were integrated. The CTMM covers an extensive municipal area (3,200 km²), stretching for almost 60 km east/west and 70 km north/south. The municipal area includes Pretoria, Centurion, Akasia, Soshanguve, Mabopane, Atteridgeville, Ga-Rankuwa, Winterveld, Hammanskraal, Temba, Pienaarsrivier, Crocodile River and Mamelodi.

The area is inhabited by approximately 2.2 million people. In terms of race, the proportion of Blacks with 73% is less than the national average and that of whites with 24% is somewhat higher than the national average. Coloureds and Indians account for about 2% and 1.5% respectively. An estimated 32% of the economically active population is unemployed. Sepedi (22%), Afrikaans (21%) and Setswana (17%) are the largest language groups. Three quarters of the residents live in formal areas. Almost a quarter (23%) lives in informal areas with the rest (about 2%) living in traditional areas. Access to basic services follows this pattern with 81% having access to grid electricity, 78% having refuse removal on a weekly basis and 72% having access to flush toilets and 23% to VIP toilets.

The municipality's administration has been arranged into ten departments, each headed by a strategic executive officer. The departments are Metropolitan Police, Economic Development, Marketing and Tourism, Social Development, Corporate Services, Emergency Management Services, Service Delivery, Legal Services, Finance, and City Planning, Housing and Environmental Management.

Sampling

The stratified random probability sample used for the CCRC in Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality incorporates both formal and informal (i.e., unplanned) urban settlements; high, middle and low-density areas; lower, middle and higher income areas; and reflects the geodemographic diversity found in the municipality

The sample size was 1 200 respondents and was drawn from the 2001 national Census data. The target population includes all people 16 years and older. The Primary Sampling Unit (PSU) was the enumeration area (EAs) from the 2001 Census. The Secondary Sampling Unit

(SSU) was a visiting point within each PSU. A visiting point is a stand in a formal urban area, a flat in a block of flats, a dwelling in an informal or traditional rural settlement, etc. Data from the 2001 Census at an EA level were used to define the Measurement of Size (MOS). The MOS was used to define what interval to use to systematically select visiting points in an EA. A standard number of visiting points was selected in each EA in order to derive a self-weighting sample. The Ultimate Sampling Unit (USU) was a randomly selected individual in the 16 years and older age category. All individuals from different households at the visiting point that qualified were listed before one respondent was randomly selected. Fieldwork maps were produced in a GIS to enable fieldworkers to accurately navigate into the field, to enter the PSU, and to accurately select visiting points.

Realisation of the interviews and respondent characteristics

A 100% sample realisation was achieved in the study. This is very high for surveys in South Africa and can be explained by the high levels of interest of the people in service delivery issues and the approaches implemented in the fieldwork.

Table 31: Realisation of the interviews and respondent characteristics

| | Urban formal ¹⁰ | Informal ¹¹ | Tribal ¹² | Rural formal ¹³ | Total |
|------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|---------|
| Total unweighted | 912 | 180 | 66 | 42 | 1200 |
| % Unweighted | 76.0% | 15.0% | 5.5% | 3.5% | 100% |
| Total weighted | 1107297 | 234856 | 84951 | 50516 | 1477619 |
| % Weighted | 74.9% | 15.9% | 5.7% | 3.4% | 100% |
| Under 21 years | 10.6% | 15.2% | 11.5% | 3.2% | 11.1% |
| 21 – 35 Years | 37.3% | 46.8% | 47.0% | 38.4% | 39.4% |
| 36 – 65 Years | 44.9% | 36.0% | 37.7% | 54.5% | 43.4% |
| Over 65 | 7.3% | 2.0% | 3.9% | 3.9% | 6.1% |
| Male | 40.9% | 24.2% | 40.0% | 31.2% | 37.9% |
| Female | 59.1% | 75.8% | 60.0% | 68.8% | 62.1% |
| LSM- low | 7.1% | 67.2% | 23.3% | 23.0% | 18.0% |
| LSM- middle | 48.7% | 32.2% | 76.7% | 40.6% | 47.4% |
| LSM- high | 44.2% | .6% | | 36.5% | 34.5% |
| Black | 65.7% | 100% | 100% | 71.2% | 73.3% |
| Coloured | 1.9% | | | | 1.4% |
| Indians | 1.5% | | | 8.6% | 1.4% |
| White | 30.9% | | | 20.3% | 23.9% |

Source: Roefs et al. 2006:18-19